THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR

Volume 32 *Summer, 1963* Number 3

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If You Don't Mind My Saying So . . . . . .

JOSEPH WOOD KRUTCH

Many years ago I read a short piece by H. L. Mencken about honorable men (whom he admired) and moral men (whom he did not). It wasn't, I think, more than a paragraph and it didn't give him much room to maneuver. But if I have remembered it for so long he must have made it pretty clear what he meant by the distinction. Reduced to the simplest terms it was this: an honorable man is one who keeps his word; a moral man one who insists that he always does what is "right under the circumstances."

From the first, you at least know what to expect and you can count upon him. The second seems to cover a lot more ground and assumes a larger responsibility. He would do what is "right" even if it isn't exactly (as is all too often the case) what he said he would do. He is strong for the spirit rather than the letter, for equity rather than legality; and he puts the greatest good of the greatest number above the promise of the contract. But although that sounds persuasive, one trouble is that equity and the greatest good so often turn out to be what is most convenient for him.

Now I realize, of course, that both "honor" and "morality" are inadequate to cover so large and shifting a concept as that which we try to indicate by them. But the distinction I follow and Mencken is trying to make is very important, and it is easier to discuss when you are willing for the moment to accept the two words as we define them. Moreover it is evident that if you do so then the relative importance that a civilization puts upon honor on the one hand and morality on the other has a great deal to do with the special quality of the civilization. To me, at least, it is equally evident that ours is so ready to give precedence to morality that honor is brushed aside when one seems to come into conflict with the other.

If this seems obscure let me give a simple example. I still remember my shocked realization of the seemingly irreconcilable conflict between honor and morality when Franklin Roosevelt (whom I nevertheless continued to admire and to vote for) announced the abandonment of the gold standard while I held in my hand a $20 certificate on which was beautifully engraved the statement that "the faith of the United States Government is pledged" to redeem this note in gold.

Please do not misunderstand me. I am not saying that we ought to have risked bankruptcy. Frankly I don't know whether we ought or ought not to have done so. But if the action we did take was necessary and in the interest of the greater good, it still shocks me (and I think it should shock anyone who would like to believe that honor and morality are inseparable) that the pledged word of our government should have been so calmly broken.

I am well aware that when honor is placed above everything else it is likely to become no more than a personal and ruthless pride which can lead to such obviously immoral acts as killing your opponent in a duel or even arranging for his assassination for no reason except that personal dignity is offended. Or that it may lead even to such absurdities as the famous suicide of Louis XIV's cook when the fish failed to

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arrive on time—despite the fact that, at least in Mme. de Sévigné's version, he had been assured by the king himself that the contretemps need not be taken seriously. But if the concept of honor can grow malignantly wild like a cancer, the too easy disregard of it brings practical difficulties as well as moral shames. When there is honor even among thieves (and there sometimes is) we at least know where we stand; when there is none among governors or nations we approach anarchy.

One of the side—but surely not trivial—effects of justifying broken faith by invoking "the higher good" is the encouragement it gives to sophistical evasions and the blurring of actual facts. A generation before we found it necessary to break the pledged word of the United States Government in the matter of the gold certificates, Woodrow Wilson announced conscription in preparation for World War I by proclaiming that "this is not conscription but a nation's volunteering as a whole." I am not opposed to conscription. Under the conditions of modern war to refuse to invoke it would probably be to accept inevitable defeat in advance. But is there in *1984* any more perfect example of newsthink? And should a government sink to the level of a Madison Avenue copywriter or to that of the Soviet Politburo?

Newsthink, like everything good or bad, is of course not a new invention. In that line Tertullian's *"certum est, quia impossible est"* has never been improved upon and sometimes I think that the Miltonic conception of "true freedom" as consisting only in the freedom to do right, not in the freedom to do wrong, must be regretfully put in the same class as the Russian definition of a People's Democracy as one in which the people have nothing to say about what happens to them. But if newsthink is not a modern invention it certainly is one we have learned how to exploit more exuberantly than ever before. (Incidentally it might be added that Anna Louise Strong once wrote an article in which she resolved the paradox of the People's Democracy by maintaining that although the Russian people probably would not have voted in favor of many of the regulations imposed upon them these regulations did nevertheless implement their deepest desires.)

Once you accept the premise that any sort of misrepresentation is justifiable if it helps us to achieve a desirable end, and that befuddlement of the people in their own interest is moral if not entirely honorable, you run into another difficulty: just who has a right to befuddle and who has not?

Consider, for example, the case of our own government which attempts to restrain misrepresentation in the advertising of business enterprises but is less severe in regard to its own domestic propaganda. On the one hand, the Federal Trade Commission recently filed a complaint against one of the large phonograph companies that had been advertising a special offer of "any six of these superb $3.98 to $6.98 long-playing 12-inch records for only $1.89." "In truth and in fact," said the F.T.C., "the amounts set out . . . were not and are not now the prices at which the merchandise referred to is usually and customarily sold at retail." In other words, the advertisement disregarded the fact that most record shops are now "discount houses."

But is the record company's advertising any more misleading than that which the government itself sponsors for savings bonds? Does anyone responsible for them really believe that if you start now buying bonds to pay for the future education of your infant child on the basis of what education now costs you will actually be able to finance it twenty years hence out of the accumulated funds? Isn't it nearly as sure as death or taxes that the value of the dollar must continue to decline, that in fact our ability to deal with an expanding public debt depends in part upon the assumption that we will pay it off in a depreciated currency; and that, therefore, either the investor in savings bonds will be left holding the bag or the nation will go bankrupt? It may be a patriotic duty to buy savings bonds. But to do so is not to insure your children's future.

Such consequences of newsthink and the

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habit of putting morality (that is, expedience) ahead of honor (or truth-telling) are relatively minor by comparison with the great fact that nations have come all but openly to recognize that solemn covenants are solemn frauds. Word-breaking by nations is, of course, also no new thing but at least it used to be called treachery, not realism, and the famous World War I pronouncement that a certain treaty was merely "a scrap of paper" came as a genuine surprise as well as shock. It remained to the twentieth century to come very near to accepting the fact that all treaties are, of course, potentially nothing more. Lenin made the most inclusive generalization, "there is no such thing as morality in politics"—perhaps he should have said honor; and when Chamberlain violated the solemn treaty with Czechoslovakia and justified the action on the grounds of a greater good, mainly that the peace of Europe would be gained, he was enthusiastically embracing the doctrine that expedience takes precedence over honor. As is so often the case, it turned out that dishonor didn't actually create that greater good; but even if it had done so in this case, the fact would have remained that the whole basis of international agreements upon which, in the long run, peace must depend had been destroyed. Shortly thereafter the French began to shout "don't die for Danzig" and now in our own country it is "better red than dead." Now I shall be told that I am idealizing the past, that individuals and nations are as honorable as they ever were, and that the only change lies in the fact that we now more frankly admit that pledges are seldom kept if they work seriously to the disadvantage of those who make them. But there certainly is less honor among individual soldiers. When we read in history about this or that captured officer who "gave his parole" and was released to go home, does not that seem merely quaint? Who would be given such a privilege today, and who, if he were given it, would not consider that violating the parole was serving the higher morality if it enabled him to render more probable the ultimate achievement of that general good for which his country was fighting? Just before the First World War broke out the *New York Times* printed a now famous editorial in which it regretted what it recognized as the probability of large European conflict but expressed also the comforting conviction that a war between great powers was certain to be fought with due regard to the laws and protocols of existing international agreements. Probably most people accepted the optimistic assumption of the *Times* that honor was something that nations were still anxious to preserve and that necessity, the tyrant's plea, would not be accepted as sufficient excuse for any amount of treaty-breaking.

Does everything that I have been saying seem priggish and self-righteous, or, as we are more likely to say nowadays, unrealistic? Perhaps it will seem less so if I admit that I do not know how to resolve the problems that I have been trying to face. I wish I could believe that there never is a genuine rather than a merely hypocritical conflict between the honorable and the moral. But that such a conflict can exist is exactly the most troublesome aspect of the whole subject. I am—to return to one of the simplest examples I have given—not by any means ready to say that Roosevelt was wrong in taking us off the gold standard or even that Wilson was not justified if, at a time of crisis, he helped unify the nation by his willingness to employ that outrageous bit of newsthink about "a nation's volunteering as a whole." The problem is even more thorny when it takes the form so usual today: "Shall I keep faith with an enemy who, I am quite sure, will not keep faith with me?" But it still remains true that of all the moral decisions a statesman has to make none is more difficult than that which seems to require that either honor or the general good be sacrificed. Even when the latter seems clearly of overriding importance there are always two dangers: the first is inherent in the fact that human nature weighs the scale in favor of personal advantage; and the second, that you never know how much you are losing when you demonstrate the untrustworth-

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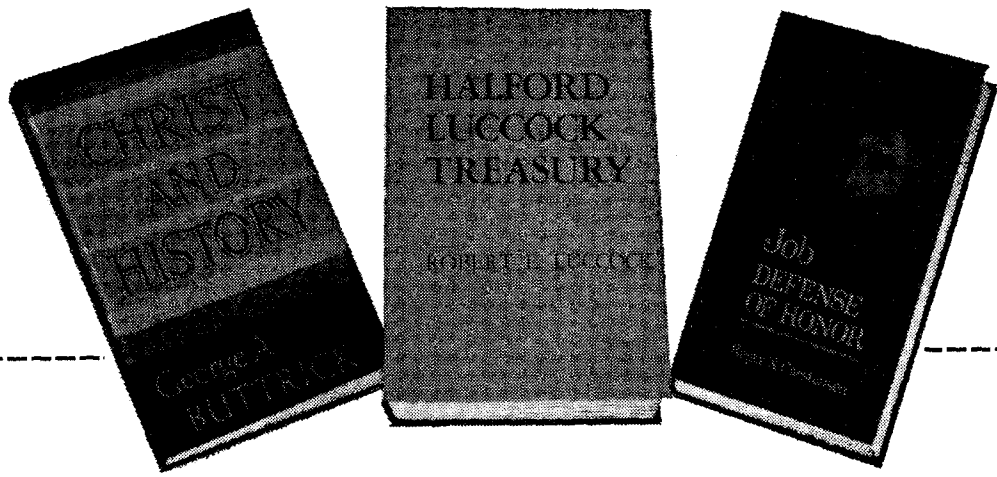

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iness of your word. Machiavelli had a rule, get a reputation for truth-telling and promise-keeping by being scrupulous about both when there isn't much at stake: and then, having established that reputation, you can take advantage of it when a really important piece of treachery is in the making. That solution, although eminently realistic (and seemingly not sufficiently considered even for practical purposes by the Russians), can hardly be called either moral or honorable. The most I can say is only that if in certain other ages both individuals and sometimes governments too readily resolved the dilemma in favor of what they called honor, ours leans too strongly in the opposite direction, and we would all be better off today if the greatest good hadn't been so readily accepted. Lord Tennyson is responsible for that somewhat fusty Victorian paradox, "his honor rooted in dishonor stood and faith unfaithful kept him falsely true." I only wish that some modern equally talented would describe as pointedly the opposite situation where a high morality and a greater good are rooted in faith-breaking.

I hold to the opinion that our own country has on the whole behaved more honorably in recent years than some of its allies as well as most of its enemies—although I am well aware that many intellectuals would hoot at this as a bourgeois prejudice. I am on the other hand less sure that we are any better than others when it comes to the individual's willingness to accept as a rule of private conduct the "everybody does it so it must be all right."

Certainly the recent investigations of cheating in schools and colleges and the prevailing attitude toward it suggests as much, and I recently met with an extraordinarily complicated example both of the practice and the attitude. The high school son of a Tucson friend came to his father with a problem: pressure was being put upon him by a group of his fellows, all among the top students of the class, to join them in an elaborate scheme for falsifying the grades of some low-ranking members of the class. The conspirators would gain nothing scholastically—their grades were high already. But they would win the favor of those whom they benefited, many of whom were among those regular fellows who, alas, have in the school society more status than the bookworms and the teacher's pets. Accept honor as the decisive consideration and there is no problem. Otherwise it is quite a thorny one. If you can both help the poor lame ducks along and at the same time make it easier for everybody to "adjust to the social situation," is that achieving perhaps the greatest good for the greatest number? And isn't it therefore obvious that honor should be sacrificed to morality—which is now so often defined as essentially "that which is socially useful?"

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Guy Stanton Ford

May 9, 1873-December 29, 1962

Dr. Ford's generation, it seems to me it has been too seldom remarked, is an extraordinary one, both among European and American intellectuals, writers, artists, lawyers, government heads, educators and professional men and women of all sorts. For example, I know well at least a half dozen men and women now in their eighties who are possessed of a vigor and incisiveness, a quality of mind and spirit, that is extraordinary. Of this company until late last year was Guy Stanton Ford, who died a half year before what would have been his ninetieth birthday.

Others have already written (and I have read) of the distinguished historian, the splendid administrator and—in at least one case—the "gentle scholar." Gentle I suppose Guy Ford was, but only in the sense of that kind of gentleness which comes from a deep inner, and integrated, strength. There are many people better qualified than I to speak about the events and achievements of his life, but the work we shared on THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR gave me the feeling that I knew *the man within the man,* even though there were a great many things about him that I didn't know.

What I mean is perhaps clearest through an illustration. The very first time I met him was at a meeting involving what seemed to me an important moral problem. As the meeting continued, I was increasingly unhappy to realize that none of the twenty-odd distinguished American educators present was going to face that issue and act decisively within its context. I had reluctantly just come to this realization when I discovered that I was wrong. For Dr. Ford stood up and, speaking very quietly, brought everyone present, however unwilling, face to face with one of those rare moments of truth.

I would not say that the key to his character was "no compromise." I suppose that he must have compromised a number of times, as does almost every human being. No, I think rather it was no compromise when the issue at stake was central to human dignity. So perhaps the key I am searching for is rather to be found in "no compromise without knowing that it is a compromise and without recognizing its nature." I still grope—stammer. Integrity, honor, honesty? Truth, I keep hearing inside my head. Truth it was, I think. The truth, the truths—to these he committed himself. And that is why, although we have lost him, we have not lost our sense of him. And for those of us who loved him, whenever we are tempted to do something shabby and dishonest, it is necessary to circle off the straight path to reach the act that will follow the decision, because there on that path he still stands, confronting us.

HIRAM HAYDN

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From Abroad: *A Special Issue*

Emerson's "American Scholar" was thoroughly American. This was a part of his urgent plea for originality and autonomy. But he did not confuse being American with being provincial, and I think that we of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR have long felt that the way in which we have been most provincial and least Emersonian has been in securing relatively few people from other countries to contribute to our magazine. This has never been intentional, but we don't seem to have established as firm lines of communication and exchange in other countries and continents as have some other American magazines. Whatever the reasons, we finally determined to devote a whole issue, perhaps more than one, to the thoughts and writings of the people of other nations.

The present special number is the result. A series of invitations was issued, beginning almost a year ago. But there have been all sorts of problems: letters were misdirected; there was sometimes no reply; once or twice a promise has been broken. Deadlines could not always be kept, and eventually we postponed this special number from Spring to Summer. The whole process has been confusing, and sometimes discouraging. Yet I believe it to be well worth all the difficulties it engendered. Of course anything approaching a full representation of geographical and national spread and diversity was almost impossible. Our efforts did not secure anyone from the Soviet Union, China, Germany or Italy, for example. And how absurd that there should be only one person from all of Africa in this issue, and only one representative of the whole continent of South America!

The comfort and pride we take in the special number come from the quality of what we did secure and the fact that its very nature makes an even and nearly full distribution less important. For this is not the usual sort of international issue in which people from various places take up a single subject or a group of allied subjects and argue back and forth. We chose no central issue; I wrote variants of the following paragraph to the people whom we decided, after much consultation, to invite to contribute:

> We are now planning a special number of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR for June 1963. With the exception of the departments we run in every issue, we hope that the pieces in it will be written by people who are not citizens of the United States. One or another sort of international issue is always being produced by one or another journal, but we have in mind something different from most. Instead of seeking particular issues or subjects, we are seeking people. We would be very much honored if you would be one of these people. Our idea is that you should write on any subject that seems at this moment to be of the most passionate concern to you. It may be politics or metaphysics, literature or criminology, the hydrogen bomb or farming, personal experience or public crisis. What we really want is to know what some of the people in other countries (you among them) are meditating or speculating about—what seems to them of paramount concern.

Our hope now is that you, our readers, will find here something of real value and pertinence to our own participation in this troubled, seething world in which we live—that you, as we, will learn from hearing the thoughtful voices of people from "out there."

HIRAM HAYDN

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Morning at the Conference Table

JACQUES DE BOURBON BUSSET

IN THE MIDDLE OF THE GREAT HALL the green baize table cover emits a faint glow. The table is set up as if for a game of bridge. Because we are at the Quai d'Orsay our Foreign Minister feels quite at home. He chooses his place—the South. At his right he seats the Minister of the East, at his left the Minister of the West, across from him the Minister of the North. Behind each one are his experts: diplomatic (I am one of these), military, economic and legal. The rows of the experts will shift according to the order of business. When a problem in a particular field comes up for discussion, the specialists will move from the third or fourth row to the second; then when the discussion is ended, they will go back to their original places.

The human components of the scene are in order. The background—a government building in the style of Napoleon III—does not matter. If it were a Victorian club or an ultramodern hotel, it would be the same thing. No one would pay any attention. To tell the truth, the scenario is not quite ready. Many of the actors are standing or have got up from their chairs to indulge in private conversations. The experts are trying to talk to the Ministers, and if they succeed they glance obliquely at their colleagues, in an attempt to win their envy and admiration. A Western military man's cheeks are suffused by a purple flush. He is trading memories of battles and golf matches with a diplomat from the North. The experts from the East form a protective wall around their Minister, who has just made a witty remark. They are shaking with laughter.

✪ JACQUES DE BOURBON BUSSET, who was director of the cabinet of Foreign Minister Robert Schuman, has served also as director of cultural affairs at the Quai d'Orsay. He writes a monthly column in *La Table Ronde*, and his recent books include *Les Mémoires d'un lion, l'Olympien* and *Les aveux infidèles*.

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The photographers are admitted, tumbling all over one another. "Go ahead," they are told, "but be quick about it!" Spotlights, and a volley of insistent and familiar admonitions:

"Mr. Minister, raise your head!"

"Mr. Ambassador, your right-hand profile, if you please. And pretend you're talking to your neighbor."

Suddenly there is a sharp noise. Who has fired? The bodyguards of the Minister of the East have leaped to their feet with raised fists. A photographer brandishes his camera; the flashbulb is shattered. There is widespread, somewhat nervous laughter.

Our Minister picks up a tortoiseshell paper cutter and strikes the crystal ashtray to the right of his blotter. A moment of confusion. The photographers go away. Amid a subdued and diminishing noise everyone sits down. The clock which has given its name to the hall—Salle de l'Horloge—stands at five minutes after ten.

The first matter to be decided is that of the chairmanship. We all know that it will take an hour to settle, but that once this interval has passed it must be decided by any and all means within two minutes. Each one of us prepares to prolong his early morning sleep.

Our Minister wants to be chairman. After all, he is the host. While he was shaving his wife has reminded him that if he is not chosen, the seating arrangement at the official dinners will present insoluble problems. Such an argument would make the newspapermen smile, but it has its importance.

At the moment of consulting his colleagues our Minister runs up against a first difficulty, symbolic of those to come: in what order is he to grant the floor? Clockwise or counterclockwise? There is much to be said for either one. What are the precedents? The Minister turns to the permanent Executive Secretary of the Quai d'Orsay, Anatole, as we call him, who turns to the chief legal light, who refuses to commit himself and proposes drawing lots.

The experts of the East listen attentively, persuaded that these consultations are leading up to some sort of insult. The Minister of the West extracts from an alligator case his first cigar. There is a sound of vague grumbling, of flushing or cascading water. The Minister of the North clears his throat. Chewing his tongue and his

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thumb he suggests following the order of bidding at whist. There are faint smiles.

Our Minister catches the ball on the bounce. "If you mean bridge, I agree. Just as long as it isn't poker."

He wheels around, pleased with himself, in our direction. Our smiles turn into laughs. His jaundiced glance catches mine, and the smile fades from my face. For reasons of both pride and self-interest I don't want to appear to be a sycophant. He would think the less of me. I laughed out of loyalty to my colleagues, who are aware that the Minister has known me for twenty years, a fact which I try to gloss over except on important occasions, such as promotions and foreign assignments, when I discreetly call it to mind.

One winter evening, twenty years ago, I was going down the Rue d'Ulm, on my way from a course in Greek epigraphy at the Sorbonne to my rooms at the École Normale. I was hurrying along, looking forward to a cup of hot tea, when one of my friends clapped me on the shoulder. I turned around and he introduced me to a boy slightly older than ourselves, a small, redheaded fellow with a prominent nose and squinting eyes. "He's in politics," my friend told me. Actually he was a journalist attached to a Cabinet member's undersecretary. After that he came often to our quarters. The son of a schoolteacher in the region of Limoges, he enjoyed the company of students preparing for the teaching profession at the École Normale.

He was a socialist, like the rest of us, but he stubbornly refused to take out a party card. This is the only point to which he has stuck his whole life long. He will die before he is a party member.

I don't like running into his wife, whose eyes wander with a bored expression over the tapestries and gilt ornamentation of the Quai d'Orsay. In her spent face I see a reflection of my own added years. At twenty-two I was passionately in love with her, but she didn't even notice. Her father was a well-known doctor, who helped his son-in-law to make useful friends. Marie-Laure didn't have much small-talk—little more than she has today—but she overlooked nothing. She passed judgment on people's "usefulness" with a self-assurance that impressed us. We thought that she was only joking, but now I am not so sure.

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Amid clouds of pipe-smoke the future Minister of Foreign Affairs initiated us into the realities of politics. He called the various Cabinet members by their first names, and laughed when we were shocked by their abandonment of one principle for another. "Politics is all a matter of technique. Sincerity is just another form of stupidity. You have to see, before anyone else, the shape of events to come and, what's harder, to guess at other people's imbecilic reactions."

Why am I not in his place? If I had failed to pass the Foreign Service exams I'd be better off today. I'd be on the staff of a newspaper or a news agency.

He is growing old. His neck is thickening and his shoulders are stooped. It isn't Marie-Laure who tires him. Is it another woman? No, it's his ambition to be Premier. He is up for an unwritten examination. Every word he says—and every one he does not say—may endanger his success. His more and more frequent silences are being counted against him.

Why should he want so badly to be Premier? Simply in order to be Number One, to have nobody over him. (The President of the Republic has no real responsibilities and gives orders only to his staff members.) When the present Premier takes our Minister by the arm and engages him in conversation beside one of the bay windows, he wrings his hands and perspires all over. He knows that we are looking at him and thinking: "He's in for a scolding."

And yet his present position is comfortable and long-lasting. He has created the myth that he is a technician, "the only statesman whose technical ability neither East nor West can deny."

Of course we real technicians laugh up our sleeves. He has never read the files. And yet we must grudgingly admit that he knows instinctively what they contain. He is gifted with the flair of a journalist accustomed to getting straight to the heart of a matter, or else with the inspiration of a poet. The latter phrase is attributed to one of our ambassadors, temporarily unassigned ("in the ice-box," as we say), who is said by our Executive Secretary to be "adept at flattery."

If I were the Minister, the team around the table would be quite different. There is not a single one that I should keep on.

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The Minister is raising his voice. Turning toward the Minister of the West he is asking his opinion on the matter of the chairmanship. The Minister of the West has a cutting and disagreeably nasal tone of voice, which goes with his heavyset face and blotchy complexion. He is a mixture of a clergyman and a garment manufacturer; even when he is trying to be amiable he looks irritated. This is presently the case, as he mutters: "The chairmanship falls to the host nation. I don't see any other way to handle it."

The Minister has understood, for he is twiddling his fingers, but he calls for a translation. Then he says suavely: "My dear colleague, there are no obligations among us. I thought we were a group of friends and not. . . ."

He stops short. Anatole, fearing that he will go too far, has whispered into his ear: "Wrap it up!"

The Minister knows that those of us who are sitting in the second row have noticed Anatole's prompting. He is fed up with being treated like a little boy by this pretentious aesthete. And so he wraps it up in his own way: ". . . and not a trade union of malcontents."

The interpreter, an Armenian refugee, who is a student of pre-Socratic philosophy, blunts the point by omitting "malcontents." The comparison to a trade union makes everyone laugh, and an incident is averted.

It is the turn of the Minister of the North. Like a big dog chewing his rations, he emits a few sounds, interspersed with giggles. The Armenian sums it up as: "The Minister of the North thinks that the only important question is which one of the four of us will be the dummy."

Before the Minister of the East can make his reply he has to take in a explanation poured into his ear by his chief expert, Ossip Ossipovich, whom I knew well when he was Counselor in his country's Paris embassy. The Minister of the East nods, adjusts his glasses and stares balefully at the Minister of the West. Finally he states that he is surprised by this suggestion and considers it a maneuver. He must ask his government for instructions, and for this purpose he demands that the meeting be adjourned. The request is granted, and we all get up.

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It is too early for the different delegations to mingle together. The time for sending up trial ballons, exchanging purposeful confidences and hinting at negotiation has not yet come. We have not even got through the first course. The delegation from the East has left three observers to watch out for any signs of connivance, while the other members have gone with their Minister to shut themselves in the fortress of their embassy. Our Minister, in order to appear at ease, is telling stories of his youth, beginning with his first electoral battle in Saintonge.

"Those were the good old days," he tells us. "I was still full of illusions, as naïve as a Christian Democrat—of that period, I mean —because now they're even more cunning than the rest of us. I paid calls on all the mayors and other local notables, and jotted down in a little notebook the gist of what each one had to say, with the idea of weaving it into my last public speech and thus bolstering their self-esteem. But all my trouble went for nothing. The day before the election my adversary brought out his secret weapon: I was a newly naturalized Lebanese shopkeeper. I had just time to call Paris for information about him. He had gone twice into bankruptcy. This was the theme of my windup and the cause of my success. All day long my campaign manager, an oyster breeder, went around to all the cafés saying: 'I prefer a successful rug-dealer to a bankrupt big businessman.' The common sense of the voters was in my favor."

"Paul Valéry always used to tell me that in politics the important thing is the relationship of a man to the mass of other men with whom he has no personal acquaintance." The expression on Anatole's face, as he put in this remark, was an amazing mixture of obsequiousness, scorn and vanity. As he spoke his eyes sparkled. In them I could see his pride in having brushed elbows with a great man, one who was said to have taken an interest in the opera with a diplomatic theme, *The Crime of Rastadt,* which he had written under an assumed name.

But the Minister was not listening. He was recalling his first speech before the Chamber of Deputies (now, of course, the National Assembly). "I was scared to death, just as the Old Hands had told me I would be. The number of speeches I had made before

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was of no help whatsoever. The rostrum of the Chamber of Deputies is like no other. First, there is a yawning empty space before you, and the Cabinet Bench, enveloped in a cloud of smoke, seems miles away. And there's no public less attentive, less inclined to conceal its utter boredom. Nowhere else do people so shamelessly read their newspapers in plain sight of the speaker. I began, following a piece of advice attributed to Poincaré, in a very low voice, so as to oblige my hearers to be silent if they wanted to catch a word. But the result was just the opposite of what I had intended: a mounting noise drowned out my voice. I pounded my fist on the railing, but this gesture was greeted by laughter.

"Marie-Laure was sitting in the front row, and I shot her a glance. Under her astrakhan toque I could see the tense and drawn expression of her face, and I realized that I mustn't let my anxiety overcome me. I stared straight at a deputy on one of the center benches, a placid, puffy-faced fellow, who was obviously absent in spirit but whose eyes were fortunately looking straight ahead at the rostrum. The question was to convince him, to speak to him alone. For his benefit I enlarged upon the advantages of local taxation, decried the interference of the national government in local affairs and attacked its intention of suppressing local courts and prisons. The noise gradually subsided and my audience of one encouraged me by nodding his head. When I went back to my own bench the restrained applause of my friends seemed to me an ovation. I inquired as to the identity of my follower. 'You must mean the veterinary from Cantal, who has a nervous tic of nodding,' one of the attendants told me. 'It always looks as if he were trying to drive in a nail with his chin.' "

At this point our laughter was interrupted by the opening of the double door. The Minister of the East charged into the hall, under close guard. He asked for the floor, and began to read a long statement, denouncing the maneuvers of the capitalist, imperialist and colonialist powers and proclaiming his country's sponsorship of peace, freedom, democracy and the emancipation of all peoples. Nobody listened to either the harangue or its translation. But the last sentence caused us all to prick up our ears.

"In order to assure an equitable distribution of responsibilities,

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my delegation, upon orders from its government, proposes a rotating chairmanship."

Our Minister was delighted with the possibility of a solution. He was thinking of the evening papers and dreading a headline that might run: IMPASSE AT THE VERY FIRST SESSION OF THE PARIS CONFERENCE. He proceeded to clarify the point: "If you like, the chairmanship will pass every morning from one nation to another, in the order upon which we settled for holding the floor."

The Minister of the East raised his hand. "My delegation takes this suggestion as an insult. It's an underhand device for keeping us out of the chair. The meetings may very well last no more than four days, and probably they will be shorter and shorter. If this procedure is adopted my delegation will be obliged to withdraw from the conference at once."

General stupor. Everyone is talking at once, and our Minister raps the ashtray with his paper cutter in vain. Silence is not restored. The Minister of the North speaks up, going for once directly to the point: "Let's rotate the chairmanship every hour."

The delegation from the East holds a consultation, with the round, shaven heads of its members all huddled together, like croquet balls gathered in the evening beside the box in which they are to repose during the night. The Minister of the East, with a hangdog air, is listening to a diatribe on the part of a young man with a violent mouth and slit eyes. My neighbor fancies he has overheard the word "trap."

Anatole feels that his hour has come. The excitement has reached a point where a compromise may be acceptable. It is a question of making a proposal that seems to come from the Minister rather than from himself. This is an easy sacrifice, for he will pour the true story into eager ears later on.

"If I have understood you correctly, Mr. Minister, you are thinking of a chairmanship that would rotate not every day, but at every session, which would mean twice a day and give everyone a turn."

The Minister has been intent, all along, on being the sole chairman from one end of the conference to the other, but he is quick to

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seize upon the life belt that Anatole has tossed him. In a steady voice he makes Anatole's proposal his own. And because the room has begun to be hot it is adopted on the spot.

The Minister turns to Anatole: "Let the press know at once."

Anatole signals to Oscar, the chief of the press bureau, who is sitting in the third row. Oscar gets up and goes over to Anatole, who whispers a few words into his ear. The evening papers' headline will run: OUR MINISTER SAVES THE CONFERENCE FROM A THREATENED IMPASSE.

—Translated by FRANCES FRENAYE

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Thoughts on Our Present Discontents

BERNARD LEVIN

WHEN MR. DEAN ACHESON, last December, delivered his thoughtful survey of international affairs to the cadets of West Point, he can scarcely have been prepared for the reaction that his remarks produced in Great Britain. Those passages in his speech that referred to Britain were, after all, mild, accurate, friendly in tone, in no way original, and in any case an insignificant part of the whole. Few people in Britain who take an interest in such matters need to be told that the idea of a unified Commonwealth is a myth (not that Mr. Acheson put it so baldly), or that, Britain's old position in the world having been eroded by time and the facts, she needs to find another, and has not yet succeeded in doing so. Nor could it have come as a surprise to many to learn that in the opinion of a distinguished foreign friend of Britain her attempt to play a separate role of power in the world was no longer convincing, for this has been the inarticulate major premise of British foreign policy for a good many years.

Yet the reaction to Mr. Acheson's remarks was immediate and violent. Much of the press hysteria can be discounted: the slipshod jingoism of the bulk of the press in this country is no credit to any of us here, and little to those elsewhere who take it seriously. But Prime Ministers must be taken seriously, even if only *ex officio*.

First hat in the ring came from Lord Chandos, president of the massive Institute of Directors—a pressure group too loose to be in any direct sense influential, but carrying the kind of weight that anybody speaking in the names of some thousands of leading businessmen, manufacturers and *commerçants* must inevitably have. (It is of some small significance, for instance, that the worst of the

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British television networks, which had refused to carry the—non-party—coverage of the annual party conventions, did transmit the proceedings of the Institute's annual get-together.) Lord Chandos was, as Mr. Oliver Lyttelton—that is, before his elevation to the peerage and retirement from party politics to become chairman of one of our largest electrical megacorporations—a Conservative Cabinet Minister, charged with responsibility for colonial affairs. To remember the Lyttelton era at the Colonial Office is to be faced abruptly with a realization of the distance British policy has traveled even since the retirement of Churchill from the Premiership in 1955. For Lyttelton was one of the last of the paternalistic, iron-fisted Colonial Secretaries who ruled over an Empire on which it really did look as if the sun would never set. He must—although he has wisely refrained from comment on the subject—have watched with amazement, if not dismay, the ever-increasing rapidity with which his work, and that of his predecessors for a century, has been dismantled under the pressure of the wind of change.

Be that as it may, Lord Chandos addressed a letter to Mr. Macmillan on the subject of Mr. Acheson's remarks. The speed with which he acted, and the absurdity of his comments, make it highly probable that he had not read the speech, or indeed any but the most garbled press versions of it, before doing so. This in itself is significant, for the Institute of Directors in general, and Chandos in particular, are by no means part of any lunatic fringe: clearly Mr. Acheson's speech touched a nerve that had been thought to have atrophied. The speech was described as "a calculated insult to the British nation." The letter spoke of Mr. Acheson's "denigrations of the Commonwealth," addressing the Prime Minister directly in saying, "We feel sure we will have your especial sympathy in this." Further, the letter went on, Mr. Acheson was known to be one of President Kennedy's advisers, and his speech might therefore, alarmingly, represent the views, "in however distorted a fashion, of the Administration." Finally, Lord Chandos, having expressed his Institute's extreme alarm at "the likely national and international impact of statements which constitute a bitter attack on the present policies of the British Government and people," made so bold as to assume that "the sentiments ex-

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pressed in this letter are those of a majority of the British people," and urged Mr. Macmillan "to reply in no uncertain terms to the deplorable criticisms of the United Kingdom uttered by Mr. Acheson."

And Mr. Macmillan did. The nerve Mr. Acheson had touched, it seemed, was more sensitive, and had been dormant longer, than many of us had suspected. Mr. Acheson, said the Prime Minister, "has fallen into an error which has been made by quite a lot of people in the course of the past 400 years, including Philip of Spain, Louis the Fourteenth, Napoleon, the Kaiser and Hitler"—as unlikely a boatful as Mr. Acheson, I dare swear, has ever found himself among. The startling extravagance of Mr. Macmillan's retort produced a mild counterreaction; one or two notable figures (including a Cabinet colleague of Lord Chandos) dissociated themselves from it, and calm was ultimately restored. The calm, however, was the deceptive calm of the Athenian expedition to Sicily, with Nemesis among the passengers. A few weeks later, Mr. Macmillan's Battle of Syracuse took place in Brussels, and the ruin of his and his Government's policy, which for the best part of two years had been based upon Britain's accession to the European Economic Community, was complete. Hubris had, as ever, attracted her due reward.

I dwell in such detail on this episode because most thoughtful Britons might argue that it was the last, dying kick of the old-fashioned British lion, and thus to be treated with amusement, whereas I believe it to be much more likely that it was the birth-cry of a new animal altogether, and a much more dangerous one. The old beast died in December, 1941, when the United States entered the war, and was buried at Suez at the end of 1956. But today Britain is in profound and ugly danger from a new quarter, and it is not easy to see how she is to escape it. This danger is of a new kind of Anglocentric isolationism. On the left, it shades into a tainted neutralism, tangled in a web of appeasement and unilateral disarmament, a movement that, ironically, is itself rapidly withering away. On the right, it becomes almost indistinguishable from old-fashioned gunboat adventurism, currently symbolized by the monumental dishonesty of the Government's defense policy—

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scarcely equaled even by that of President de Gaulle and his nonexistent and unattainable *force de frappe*. But the thing itself is subtly different from both of these, although its effect may turn out to be a hair-raising amalgam of both of theirs. (It is no accident that the opposition to Britain's entry into the European Common Market, with a small handful of—mainly academic or opportunist —exceptions, consisted of the extreme left and the extreme right, with such colorfully antediluvian Tories as Lord Sandwich sharing political platforms with extreme left-wing Labour M.P.'s such as Mr. Sidney Silverman, although in more normal circumstances neither would happily share a railway carriage with the other. The opposition in this case, as it happened, was entirely risible, in particular Lord Beaverbrook—whose newspapers were most vociferous in the anti-Market clamor—adding much gaiety and fresh adherents to the Market cause every time he denounced it. It was also entirely unsuccessful, the *coup de grâce* having been administered elsewhere and for very different reasons. But the phenomenon, although of no direct effect, had a symbolic significance it would be unwise to ignore.)

The clear and present danger takes two slightly different forms, depending on the standpoint of the observer; for the tendencies, both essentially reactionary, of Britain's two main political parties, are in truth distorted mirror-images. The temptation for the Conservatives is to seek the kind of lost and nonsensical grandeur, memories of which prompted Mr. Macmillan's reply to the Institute of Directors' letter. And the Labour Party, which on present form must be considered a clear favorite to win the General Election whenever it is held, has currently the most inward-looking economic policy that Britain has seen since the Tariff Reform struggle at the end of the nineteenth century. Both policies, as a matter of fact, are likely to be felt economically before politically, since the Tories look just as likely to ruin the country in the impossibly expensive pursuit of a mythical "independent nuclear deterrent" as the Labour Party is with its restrictionist distributive theories. But the ultimate result of either will be external, political and strategic: it would weaken Britain as a member of the Western alliance, and thus weaken that alliance; it would further upset the

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already badly shaken European balance; it would encourage President de Gaulle (assuming he is still with us—and it would encourage any foreseeable successor even more) in his follies; it would start (or encourage; it needs, alas, no starting) a spiral of anti-American feeling which must increase American pressure for European disengagement; it would, in short, set back our clocks to an extent that we simply cannot afford. Nor would it be our clocks alone that were affected.

In a sense, these dangers spring from a situation that is particular and local, not general. The exhaustion after twelve years in office of Conservative policy, and the depletion of the resources, in men and ideas, of Mr. Macmillan's Administration, are accidents of time and situation. And the Labour Party's narrow outlook (Hugh Gaitskell, apart from his last obscurantist fling against the Common Market, was the one man who might have forced it to lift its eyes from the end of its nose) is the product of a long series of historical pressures and influences. And it is these two political facts that have produced the present situation. (It is perhaps worth pointing out another contributing force, especially to American readers: that during the fifties, when the initiative was seized by the Soviet bloc and the West hungered for leadership from the only quarter that could have provided it, what the West got was not leadership, but golf. There are American critics of British policy, less temperate than Mr. Acheson, who would do well to remember this.) But what matters now is not how Britain arrived at the crossroads at which she now stands, but which road she should take, and where she can hope to get to by following it.

In pursuing this line of argument I am myself falling into the insular error that lies at the heart of so much confused thinking in Britain: "Who dies if England live?" Yet there is a deeper level at which the fallacy becomes truth. Interdependence has had too much attention paid to its first two syllables, too little to its last three. We are indeed all members one of another today, and whoever weakens one part of the line weakens it all. Provided we do not think that there is anything special about our sector, we are entitled to boast about our prowess in holding it. This general principle, too, should perhaps be remembered by that American

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school of thought that talks of long-term disengagement, which may well be only old isolationism writ large.

The wrecking by President de Gaulle of Britain's application to join the European Economic Community, which Dr. Adenauer did not strive officiously to keep alive, has only served to throw into sharper relief and more lurid colors the dangers that antedate the present situation by many years. If we had been allowed to join, the movement toward full economic and political integration, combined with the increased pace at which the Commonwealth would have continued to disintegrate, might well have solved the problem for us, with nothing more serious than some agonized creakings as the old structures, especially our economy, took the new strain. As it is, not only has the lifeline been cut, but the very cutting has redoubled the strength of all the retrograde tendencies already at work.

Where, then, do we go from here? The most alarming single fact on the present British political horizon is that the Government obviously has no idea. They have too much sense to try to revive the moribund Commonwealth (although perhaps not quite enough scruple to refrain from talking about doing so); they dare not simply wait for President de Gaulle to put on immortality, if only because there is a strong suspicion here that he already has; the "special relationship" had its answer at Nassau, not to say Rambouillet; and meanwhile the entire situation is bedeviled by the domestic interparty political situation and the jockeying for position as the Election approaches.

The only viable solution left is for Britain to embrace the trauma firmly, and recognize at last her new, reduced status. The Commonwealth children have grown up and gone out into the world, where many of them have discovered they have nothing in common with their parents; the transatlantic rich relations have got other fish to fry; and the neighbors are unfriendly. The little surburban house looks shabby, old-fashioned and lonely—from the outside. The immense task for Britain now is to bring the realization of her own appearance, and the reality that that appearance represents, indoors. What we need is a Moses to lead us out of the Promised Land.

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Such prophets are few, and apt to be stoned when they arise. Yet short of an inspired leadership, similar in character (and ironically similar, beneath the surface, in purpose) to that of Churchill in 1940, it is difficult to see how the job is to be done. Great Britain is asleep on the laurels of two thousand years of history; how is she to be woken up and convinced that her role in the world from now on is to be that of any other group of fifty million people without great natural resources, with a stagnant economy, dying industrial towns, inadequate transport, an educational system little short of ridiculous, petrified labor-management relations, no defenses, no awareness of her danger, no incentive to avoid it and no more time?

Eventually, of course, history will provide the answers. But history's lessons have always been uncomfortable ones to learn. And it is not, after all, as if I were arguing that what Britain faces is an inevitable and indefinite decline. On the contrary, the tasks and the opportunities before her now are as great, in their way, as any in her history. But they do not look it; and there's the rub. It is not easy to see any political leader here having much success at the moment with a barnstorming campaign based on a slogan such as "Make Britain another Sweden" or "If West Germany can do it, so can we." Yet the first lesson in trench warfare is to make the lines as short as possible. If Britain is to survive, she must begin by facing her limitations. A good psychological coup would be the abrupt abandonment of the "independent deterrent"; such a move might indeed serve both as the symbol of our acceptance of our new position and the shove that breaks the logjam. (But, again, this has become entangled in party considerations, and if it is done it will be done by a Labour Government and for the wrong reasons.) After this, there is an immense program of action awaiting us. Abroad, the redeployment of our military and political resources, abandoning such dreams as Mr. Macmillan's summit-follies for such more useful realities as the efficient equipment of the British Army of the Rhine, and withdrawing from the interminable Geneva conference on a nuclear test-ban (no longer our concern when we no longer feel impelled to test) to get on with, say, improving the quality of our cold-war contribution in the field, say,

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of broadcasting across the Iron Curtain. (Indeed, if Britain still hankers after a symbolic role, we might well turn ourselves into the chief propaganda center for the cold war.)

At home, of course, the prospect is virtually limitless; it will take us until at least the end of the century to rationalize our economy, redraw our import-export map, make ourselves truly competitive internationally, get rid of our slums, put some sense into our social services (another ominous sign of the lack of reality in political argument in Britain is the omnipresent parrot-slogan that our social services are the envy of the world: apart from our Health Service, they are worse than those of any Western European country except Spain and Portugal), expand our educational system appropriately, and build some roads. (I say advisedly that it *will* take us until the end of the century; it *ought* not to.)

This is only the barest sketch of a program for Britain, of course. But that there must be some such program I can hardly doubt. Far-called, our Navy has long since melted away; on dune and headland the fire has sunk; our pomp of yesterday is one with Nineveh and Tyre, and has been for some time; the captains and the kings have departed; only the tumult and the shouting have not yet died. Is it too much to expect that we may remember another line of that poem, and turn to an humble and a contrite heart? Or, to put it less colorfully, when are we going to recognize in Britain that our old role in the world was based on conditions that no longer obtain: our Commonwealth and other overseas responsibilities; our position as the leading manufacturing nation; our Navy's peace-keeping character—and ability; our provision of the key to the European balance of power. But a harsh, changed world no longer requires these services from Britain. When a firm's products are no longer in demand, it either changes its line, allows itself to be absorbed by a more successful company or goes out of business. The second of these solutions, in the form of application to join the United States, is occasionally suggested, but not very seriously. The third is what will inevitably happen to Britain if she does not face her danger. The first is the only solution that will satisfy history and honor at once. "Make Britain another Sweden": "If West Germany can do it, so can we." They are, as I have sug-

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gested, unlikely slogans; but they are the only kind that will suffice. It is not at present possible, it is true, to see anybody on the current scene capable of uttering them, or of being listened to if he does. But the Dunkirk spirit was produced, after all, by Dunkirk, and it is possible that when the dust of our application to join the Common Market has settled, a form may be seen arising out of it. The form may be that of some as yet obscure Churchillian figure; this is not probable. Or it may be the realization by the Conservative Party (although not under Mr. Macmillan) of the nature and magnitude of the job to be done. This, as a matter of fact, is not probable either. But no presently visible solution is probable, and not many even possible. Necessity makes strange mothers of invention: she had better get on with the job.

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China: An Academic Appraisal

GEOFFREY ANDREW

AN INVITATION TO VISIT CHINA as a guest of the Association for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries was a handsome return for some hospitality offered a year earlier to members of the Peking Opera Company, then touring Canada. I was delighted to accept and doubly pleased to join forces with Dr. Claude Bissell, President of the University of Toronto, who had also been invited. The purpose of the trip was to learn as much as possible about education—in particular, higher education—and the arts in Communist China.

In the three weeks we were in China, we traveled to Canton, Peking, Shanghai, Hangchow and Wuhan and crisscrossed that part of China by rail and air. We visited eight institutions of higher learning: two "general" universities, two technological, two pedagogical, and two special institutes—the Foreign Language Institute in Peking and a Fine Arts Institute in Hangchow. We also visited museums, an opera school, handicraft and print "factories," a nursery school and kindergarten; and we attended a variety of theatrical performances and concerts.

We discussed education and the arts with a variety of university professors and administrators, representatives of the All China Federation of Writers and Artists, and the Director of the Central Office of Education, as well as with some Canadians, Americans and British who were living and working in China because of their sympathy with the aims of the Chinese Government. Our con-

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tacts with students and the general public were only casual, being limited by time, language and circumstance. During the May Day celebrations we were presented to Mao Tse-tung, Liu Shao-ch'i and Chu Teh; we had brief words with Chou En-lai and an interview of some forty-five minutes to an hour with the Foreign Minister, Chen Yi. Although our purposes were primarily educational and cultural, we saw something of the industrial growth of China and had one fairly thorough look at a rural commune.

I have elaborated the access we had to information in order to provide almost all the background there is for the observations that follow. The rest of the background is the history of the reporters.

Neither Dr. Bissell nor I had visited China before; nor were we China specialists. Our time was limited, as was the physical area of China we visited. We were handsomely—even royally—treated, and I find it natural to want to repay generosity with generosity.

That we did not share our hosts' ideological position did not forbid, but did in some measure inhibit, discussion. There was a time in my youth when I was more impatient with what I regard as the oversimplifications of the Communist dialogue—or dialectic. On this occasion, advancing age and the responsibilities of our position as guests prompted a philosophic acceptance of the preliminary statements of political orthodoxy that preceded each exchange of views. Indeed, I found myself with time enough to speculate on the variety of purposes served by these preliminary statements. All of them were intended to tell us that this was a demonstration of great and unshakable political solidarity. We affirm (they implied, sometimes stated) the unity for the first time in history of the Chinese people and the fraternal nationalities. One became conscious of a lack of clear identification of what constituted either "the Chinese people" or the fraternal nationalities—although one came to recognize that Tibetans were included in one or the other.

When the preliminary statement was made by the young manager of a commune or the assistant manager of a precision tool

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factory, it seemed most emphatically to mean: I affirm the political solidarity of our people among whom I am a leader. I am a leader in part because I have studied and mastered the meaning of Marxism-Leninism as interpreted by Chairman Mao. In this doctrine is truth—not only for the Chinese people, but for all people.

When the statement was made by persons of more sophisticated background, it frequently seemed to mean: I identify myself with China's present leadership because I think it is the best China has "ever had." No present alternative is thinkable. Marxism-Leninism may or may not have all the answers to all the problems that afflict China, but it seems to have enough for us to make a start on tackling some of the most basic problems, such as the undue respect for tradition that stands directly in the way of progress.

These preliminary statements, which related the speaker to the basic authority of the society, varied only a little. It was in the discussions which followed that one discovered the levels of understanding of the relationship of the individual to the society.

I came to have a kind of grudging respect for these initial statements as an important means of affirming the political unity of the Chinese people, although one couldn't help wishing they weren't considered invariably necessary. However, as a well-wisher of China, I became troubled by the extent to which industrial and agricultural leadership seemed to use political orthodoxy as a crutch or cure-all, as an almost acceptable substitute for technical or technological competence. In two of the factories we visited I felt that there was evidence of too great a reliance on political faith to help them reach the quota. Faith had already—to mix the metaphor—gotten well into the works.

It seemed to me in China—and seems even more so since my return—that the Chinese leadership must define much more clearly the respective roles of the political leader and the specialist. It remains to be seen whether they can do this, when some of the most firmly held political orthodoxy is among the top leadership. If they don't, however, both the present agricultural and industrial drives are unlikely to yield the results that are urgently required.

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We have become accustomed in recent years to hearing, and to some extent accepting, the claim that strong political leadership is needed in newly liberated or underdeveloped countries, particularly in those in which the dominant cultural traditions deny the validity of material progress. We have heard and seen some evidence that Western liberal democracy and its institutions too frequently seem to lack the toughness and resilience to uproot deeply embedded—and socially unproductive—traditional habits. The appeal of Communism in many parts of the world is that it does provide adequate central authority, toughness and a system of thought and action based on the importance of material progress. The Chinese leaders have shown both toughness and resilience on many fronts. They are now, however, face to face with the problem of how to modify the toughness and multiply the resilience of the lower echelons of the party leadership, in order to make the best use of the limited amount of agricultural and industrial expertise available to them. The political power and authority, which were necessary to inaugurate their sweeping land reforms, must discover ways and means of recognizing and giving play to the intellectual and technological authority without which the reforms cannot be successful.

Political orthodoxy from the earliest days of the revolution carried with it that social uniformity that derived from the puritanism of the revolutionary leadership. The blue or gray uniform dress—for men and women—the conspicuous self-denial, the disciplining of all appetites, the personal humility and the national hubris (both of which yield so strong a sense of moral elevation), the emphasis on plain living, high thinking and "right" thinking: all these reinforced the individual's sense of identification with Chairman Mao and, through him, with the high purposes of the New China and, through it, with Marxism-Leninism everywhere.

To the visitor, the impression of a puritan revolution is much sharpened by the contrast between China and the doorway by which you enter and leave—Hong Kong. Returning from China to Hong Kong suggests stepping out of eighteenth-century puritan

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New England straight into the Broadway of the 1920's. In China you can see many of the strengths and weaknesses of a puritan socialism; in Hong Kong many of the advantages and disadvantages of the free market.

It remains to be seen how long this present puritan abstention can be maintained. The traditionally humanistic Chinese would seem to have fewer natural gifts for self-denial than protestant North Americans, although at the moment stringency limits their indulgence as thoroughly as affluence corrodes our puritanism.

That puritanism is not native to the Chinese becomes very clear when one follows them from the enforced drabness of their public and official life to the crowded worlds of the theater, the opera, the movie, the museum or the neighborhood street. Here ceremony, costume and color, and delight in individual variation abound. The red geranium in the window frame, the tattered uniform individualized by patterned patching into the semblance of a Joseph's coat, the sumptuous costumes of the Peking Opera, the ancient Buddhist temples and other architectural monuments now restored to do honor to the ancient arts of China, the complex tracery of the May Day fireworks display in Tien an Men Square; the gradual reappearance of femininely dressed women on high days and holidays; indeed the fact that their best architectural masterpieces were created to deify man, not as in Western Europe to glorify God: all these testify in greater or lesser degree to a persistent humanism that does not want its reward in another world and that will not willingly accept a colorless social uniformity for an indefinite period. It is no accident that Mao Tse-tung thought it appropriate and wise to utter his famous dictum about a hundred blossoms flourishing, and a hundred opinions contending. Despite the limitations that are imposed (and recognized) on contending opinion, we found that the Chinese whom we met were fond of remembering that the statement had been made, and liked to assert that contention was theoretically and, they claimed, within limits practically possible.

We had one memorable argument on this subject with very able and intelligent representatives of the All China Federation

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of Writers and Artists. In response to a question by my colleague about the function of laughter in Communist literature, we all became involved in trying hard to suggest good subjects for ridicule in the Chinese society. We tried quite a number, only to have them rejected on closer examination. The conclusion reached, as I remember it, was that bureaucrats and mothers-in-law were perfectly safe. All else was doubtful—or risky.

Mao Tse-tung's statement recognizes the need for social and cultural diversity in a socialist society, and such recognition in itself creates a pretty persistent demand for its exercise.

I have explored briefly the strength and weakness of China's present political orthodoxy and social puritanism, because they both have an important bearing on the main point I want to make.

China is now engaged in a truly herculean effort to wrench the whole of that vast society out of a tradition-bound inertia into what they conceive of as a scientifically shaped society in a technologically controlled environment, all in the interest of improved human well-being.

One could feel the effort, almost physically; one could sympathize with the purpose of the effort; and yet one kept counting up the factors: first the resources, the natural wealth, in minerals and productive land; second, the people, as pairs of hands—but also as mouths; and third, and very important for the success of their experiment, people not as hands, but as brains, as special skills, as teachers and researchers; and somehow, when all the factors are added up, and due allowance made for the orthodoxies they seemingly consider necessary, the addition does not promise the quick transformation that their friends promise, or that their enemies try to threaten us with.

China, no matter how much one would like to see her people enjoy a better life tomorrow, is in no position to become a scientifically and technologically advanced nation within one, two or three decades. If we assume, as many observers will not assume, that China has, and will discover, within her boundaries, mineral resources in the quantities required to support an industrialized society growing from the present population of 700-750,000,000

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at a rate of approximately 3.5 percent per annum; and if we further assume that, with better rainfall more appropriately distributed, the application of science to Chinese agriculture will make it adequate not only to support the growing population but also to provide the tax base for industrial transformation, we then must (even if these assumptions are made and prove valid) examine the facilities for the creation of adequate skills, scientific, technological, professional and management, to spark, spearhead and support the transformation on all fronts. This was the center of our inquiry.

There are, we were informed, some 90,000,000 children in the six grades of elementary school. These 90,000,000 represent 85 percent of all Chinese children over the age of seven: 95 percent in the city, and 50-60 percent in rural communities. There are some 9,000,000 students attending the six grades of academic middle school, and another 3,000,000 in the vocational, technical or agricultural middle schools.

In addition there are, and most important for our purpose, about 900,000 students attending 745 institutions of higher learning, of which only 7 percent are comprehensive universities: 33 percent are technological; 13 percent devoted to agriculture or forestry; 20 percent to secondary teacher training; 17 percent medical; and 10 percent institutes of foreign language, economics, politics, et cetera. Among the technological institutes are ones in such special but important fields as soil conservancy, petroleum engineering, mining and metallurgy, and precision tool designing.

All these institutions offer programs of study extending over five years beyond high school. During those years, both students and staff live in dormitory or staff apartments "on campus," except for the short summer holidays when the students are expected to work with their hands—to learn the dignity of labor, to increase production and to foster social solidarity. In addition, during the winter a physical fitness and/or athletic program has been compulsory, but this, we were informed, was relaxed during the past year because, with stringent food rationing, the students needed to conserve their energy for studying.

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The emphasis in higher education, as can be seen from the categories of institution already mentioned, is on the side of immediate practical utility. Geology is needed in the hunt for minerals, foreign languages because of the need for interpreters. The needs of the state provide opportunities for the individual.

Great as the effort has been, the Chinese are aware that they have not yet begun to produce university and technological graduates in anything like the quantity required. They point out that China is only educating at the university level 13 out of every 10,000 of population, compared with 186 in the United States, 107 in the U.S.S.R., 73 in Japan and 72 in Canada.

Further, they have as yet no graduate schools in China. They are desperately short of experienced and fully qualified teaching staff and they are not in a position to do what Canada has done in recent years—recruit almost fifty percent of its university teaching staff from foreign but friendly countries.

The Chinese have been making a tremendous effort to develop all the skills they need to make the real leap forward. At present they are handicapped by too widespread a conviction that Marxism contains the "correct" answers to technical—as well as political—problems. They are also handicapped by the sheer weight of numbers to be educated or reeducated, by as yet inadequately developed natural resources, and by the unprecedented "natural disaster" of a devastating three-year drought. As a result they have now decided that they have to postpone further educational advance for a period of three years, the situation to be reexamined at that time. I have no doubt that the decision was necessary, that all energies have to be concentrated on the agricultural front—both for food and to strengthen what is, in effect, the only substantial "tax base" for further industrial advance.

It is only too easy to see why that figure of thirteen university students per ten thousand of population cannot be multiplied by five or ten in the immediate future. What they have done already since "liberation" is remarkable enough. They have increased the university student body from 150,000 to 900,000 and the teaching staff from 17,000 to 135,000, even though some 70-80 percent of

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that 135,000 are what we would call teaching assistants or teacher-learners. They have had to build classrooms, libraries, laboratories and living accommodations for the total increase, and in many cases provide almost total replacement of former facilities. All this building of university facilities is only a small part of the construction record of the first ten years. But now the further training of eighty percent of the teaching staff, the provision of new premises (in competition with other desperately needed facilities), the need to broaden the base of middle school education in order even to open up the possibility of higher education to a larger segment of the population, the provision of an adequate corps of specialist secondary teachers, the provision of adequate numbers of elementary teachers: all of these problems will take some years longer than the present pause of three years to sort out and cope with.

A vivid illustration of the scale of each of the educational problems the Chinese face is provided by the fact that there is a very widespread demand throughout China that formal schooling begin at the age of six rather than seven. Everyone seems agreed about the desirability of doing this. With 90,000,000 children now in six grades of elementary school, this modest reform would add approximately 15,000,000 additional children, requiring 400-500,000 additional teachers. It is in the face of a multitude of problems of this magnitude that one comes to recognize that the transformation of China will not take place in any short span of time. A lot of factories can be built by hand labor. The vast complex of skills that modern technological societies require takes a much longer time to accumulate. The preconditions for the real leap forward do not yet exist and must be assembled over the next decades.

At this point the question also arises whether or not the Chinese people will be willing to postpone even modest increases in consumption to provide the rate of saving required for the most rapid possible transformation.

Despite all the political exhortation and the example of leadership's self-denial there is evidence that the dream of a socialist land of plenty is not sufficiently immediate to stimulate the intensity of both work and saving that would make it seem quicker in coming.

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The intensity of work and of self-denial alike have been subsiding, and the theater queues lengthening, as people express their desire for some present pleasure instead of future promise.

This is not a conclusion from which I take any pleasure, ideological or other. I admire the present effort; I would like to see the West assist in the effort, in particular by helping out on the educational and technological fronts. Even with Western help—and that will neither be offered nor accepted for a few years—it will take a long time to transform China. Without Western help, and when the full implications of their most persistent inadequacies are fully appreciated by the Chinese leadership, the situation will become more dangerous for all of us, for in that case the mirage of national aggrandizement will be all they will have left to offer in place of the socialist dream.

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From A Common Back Cloth

A Reassessment of the African Literary Image

WOLE SOYINKA

ONLY WHEN THE POLITICAL CREATURE who persistently emerged from the common back cloth of an imposed identity—primitivism—began to display evidence of will, of individuality, of localized social and historical causation, only then did the European observer begin seriously to accept the validity of a creative imagination for the African, outside folklore and ritual. Even so he still fights a rearguard action today. It has grown subtler. Accommodation is his new weapon, not dictation. The European critic, full of the burden of an alien tradition, appears to have brainwashed himself of existing standards. In some cases he has even undergone a deliberate mental retardation, a sort of: Takes a simpleton to understand a child.

In this, he has been confidently abetted by his subject, the African self-interpreter. He himself provides instances when European condescension is amply justified. Encountering Camara Laye's *Radiance of the King,* will the critic not say, Why has this man not stuck to the simple, straightforward narrative of his *Dark Child?* For presumably the Western critic knows his Kafka. The cultivated naïveté of *The Dark Child* charmed even the African reader. Even if it often grew precious, it carried an air of magic, of nostalgia, which worked through the transforming act of language. If the author was selective to the point of wish fulfillment, it was unimportant. That a reader could be so gracefully seduced into a village idyll is a tribute to the author.

But most intelligent readers like their Kafka straight, not geographically transposed. Even the character structure of Kafka's

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Castle has been most blatantly retained—Clarence for Mr. K.; Kafka's Barnabas the Messenger becomes the Beggar Intermediary; Arthur and Jeremiah, the unpredictable assistants, are turned into Nagoa and Noaga. We are not even spared the role of the landlord—or innkeeper—take your choice! It is truly amazing that foreign critics have contented themselves with merely dropping an occasional "Kafkaesque"—a feeble sop to integrity—since they cannot altogether ignore the more obvious imitativeness of Camara Laye's technique. (I think we can tell when the line of mere "influence" has been crossed.) Even within the primeval pit of collective allegory-consciousness, it is self-delusive to imagine that the Progresses of these black and white pilgrims have sprung from independent creative stresses.

At the conference of African writers in Kampala, last June, it was readily observed that the irreverence, the impatience that marked the critical sessions was the most memorable aspect of the entire conference. This attitude was natural. In order to condemn the European critic for his present patronage, for—at the other end—his rigid sensibility, for his unavoidable exclusion from the African imagination, there was an obligation toward total rejection of all substandards, of pastiche and stereotype. The sessions were truly ruthless, often wrongheaded.

It was the same at an Afro-cultural conference in Europe not long ago, where a young French-speaking intellectual gathered all his intolerance into one sentence, "How can an African write like Kafka?" It was dishonest, he claimed. He pitted his sincerity against Camara Laye's. In the end, he conceded after much argument that Kafka was probably a South African black who escaped to Germany after the treason trials! As a principle therefore, his protest was untenable. It belongs in the same restrictive ideology of regional art. Forgetting that the African is one of the inspirations of modern European art today, the black or white Africanist turns his back on an abstract canvas, protesting that he came to view an exhibition of paintings by Africans. In many instances, this is justified; for the contemporary interpreters of African themes have not truly assimilated the new idioms. It is merely naïve to transpose the castle to the hut.

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There are, in fact, two kinds of offerings directed at the moment to the European palate. One is for acceptance in the Western creative idiom. I have mentioned the example of *Radiance of the King*. There is William Conton's proper resolution in *The African* of a Durham-to-Jungle adventure by an outrageously imposed Christian forgiveness; and there are the new poets in Nigeria who regroup images of Ezra Pound around the oilbean and the nude spear. The prophets of negritude at least dared these and scorned them, substituting a forthright although strident reaffirmation of truly "African" values, but breeding only the second offering, the burnt offering, image of the charred skin on a defiant platter. It is futile now to knock negritude; it is far more useful to view it as a historical phenomenon and to preserve the few truly creative pieces that somehow emerged in spite of its philosophical straitjacket.

But it is not so easy to ignore the facile exploiters of the fallacy, since they, even more than the muscular emblem-bearers of negritude, have been welcomed most readily into the bosom of the foreign critic. In a special issue of the *Times Literary Supplement,* a critic, reviewing a novel by a Nigerian writer, Nzekwu, says: ". . . but he cannot help presenting the traditional Ibo religion and culture in the more attractive light. It is this that will be the main attraction to the European reader: the masquerades, the prayers, the charms and the tribal social structure are described from within and with a luminous comprehension." And, to substantiate his intercultural awareness? "He is also old-fashioned enough to tell a straight story with a moral. This is the kind of story his people like." Obviously, a book that has something both for the European and for the African reader cannot help but be successful! Even the fumbling first novel of this writer is described as "very successful," and with two other Nigerian novelists the writer makes, "an unbeatable Treble Choice."

A very long time ago the discerning African rejected the anthropological novel. Perhaps during the next twenty years his foreign counterpart will do the same. Since even now African writers work against a similar back cloth, it is on the level of interpretation that the individual artist, as in any other culture, must

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be judged. Overeffusiveness at obvious window dressing (loincloth only, preferably menstrual) has created a most unfortunate prejudice against truly imaginative writers like Amos Tutuola, and worse still dammed the man's true creative channels. Of all his novels, *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* remains the best, and the least impeachable. This book, apart from the work of D. O. Fagunwa who writes in Yoruba, is the earliest instance of the new Nigerian writer gathering multifarious experiences under, if you like, the two cultures and exploiting them in one extravagant, confident whole. A study of his material, his imagery reveals this. But of course Tutuola has little in common with his African, even his Nigerian counterparts. The African writer-intellectual chooses often to dramatize his dilemma and the hollowness of his anguish indicates only too clearly that he first of all created it. A society, an intrusion, an all too predictable conflict—this was the formula, compounded in near equal proportions. Some laughed, full of hysteria; others, full of the dignity of tragedy, invoked the entire catastrophe and died. From a distance, the cultural intruders felt themselves rebuked, sympathized with and praised.

This theme is not for Tutuola, but the legacy, the imaginative duality is. The deistic approach of the Yoruba is to absorb every new experience, departmentalize it and carry on with life. Thus *Sango* (Dispenser of Lightning) now chairmans the Electricity Corporation, *Ogun* (God of Iron) is the primal motor-mechanic. Those who consider the modern imagery of Amos Tutuola a sign of impurity represent the diminishing minority of the African primevalists. And even the more accommodating ones find only charm and quaintness in Tutuola's shotgun image-weddings. Unfortunately, in attempting to interpret his symbolism, little attention has been paid to his modern experience; after all Tutuola lives *now,* and he responds to change and phenomenon. Not, in fact, except for indefatigable American scholarship, that it serves any useful purpose to reduce a writer's symbols even to events of spiritual exploration (and I have read a thesis that turned three of Tutuola's Ghostesses into the three regions of Nigeria!), but it is a useful corrective to bear in mind the appreciative approach of a similar intuition—the poetic, that is.

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"... a brief, thronged, grisly, and bewitching story ... nothing is too prodigious or too trivial to put down in this tall, devilish story." This was by Dylan Thomas. Here now is one of Tutuola's physical struggles with Nature at its most humanly thwarting: "But as we were going on and when it was time that we wanted to branch to our left, to continue the journey inside another bush as usual, we were unable to branch or to stop, or to go back, we were only moving in the road towards the town. We tried all our best to stop ourselves but all were in vain." Even if this did not come in the chapter, "On Our Way to the Unreturnable-Heaven's Town," the meaning would still, in the context, be obvious. But has Tutuola's inspiration in this instance come from folklore? It is likely. Or else from the Sunday sermon? Death or the Devil winds up the road behind the sinner and he cannot turn back. Again why not? Should it matter? A minutae essayist indignantly dismissed the Christian contribution of these two source materials and argued himself blind to a third immediate possibility. The escalator. In today's African's ever-growing back cloth of symbols, the escalator has a more vivid suggestiveness than the magical egg of plenty.

This is an important point, not in the immediate context of the Unreturnable-Heaven's Town, but in assessing how individual writers make their creative emergence from the true, not the wishful untainted back cloth. We are now attuned to the loss of Hamlet the histrionic. Hamlet of the grand gesture has been relegated for the Oedipal prince. But the sex preoccupations of Western culture should not be allowed to intrude to an extent detrimental to the enjoyment of what Amos Tutuola primarily is—a storyteller in the best Yoruba tradition, pushing the bounds of credibility higher and higher and sustaining it by sheer adroitness, by a juxtaposition of analogous experience from the familiar. It is typical that even the last war should spill onto *The Palm-Wine Drinkard.* The hyperbole of the bomb and the Complete Gentleman—"... and if bombers saw him in a town which was to be bombed, they would not throw bombs on his presence, and if they did throw it, the bomb itself would not explode until this gentleman would leave that town, because of his beauty"—is not a rupture in the even traditionalism of Amos Tutuola. It is only writers with less confi-

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dence who scrupulously avoid such foreign bodies in their vision of the traditional back cloth. The result in Tutuola is a largeness that comes from an acceptance of life in all its manifestations; where other writers conceive of man's initiation only in terms of photographic rites, Tutuola goes through it as a major fact of a concurrent life cycle, as a progression from physical insufficiency, through the Quest into the very psyche of Nature. *The Palm-Wine Drinkard,* as with Fagunwa's *Ogboju Ode* and universal myth, is the epic of man's eternal restlessness, symbolized as always in a Search. Between the author's own exorcism and the evidence of his immediate environment, we may continue our own presumptuous search for meaning.

If however we elect to return, like Tutuola's hero, wise *only* from the stress of experience, it will not have been a totally valueless journey. For Tutuola involves us in a coordination of the spiritual and the physical, and this is the truth of his people's concept of life. The accessories of day-to-day existence only become drawn into this cosmic embrace; they do not invalidate it. Questioning at the end what Tutuola's reality is, we find only a tight web enmeshing the two levels of perception. In his other books, strain becomes evident, effect for the sake of effect; the involved storyteller has yielded to the temptations of the extraneously bizarre, a dictation of his early outsider admirers who thus diffused his unified sensibility. Tutuola is not a primitive writer. With this objection removed, it is possible that the audience for which Tutuola wrote primarily (not that he thought consciously at first of any audience) would come to recognize him for what his talents offer—the contemporary imagination in a story-telling tradition.

Chinua Achebe chose to bring out his back cloth in relief at the areas of tension. In a sense—not a pejorative one—he is a chronicler, content to follow creases and stress lines, not to impose his own rearrangement on them. That this can be a creative process is demonstrated by the inexorable fate that overtakes his hero, Okonkwo, in *Things Fall Apart.* The demand we make of an expressed way of life is, first and foremost, reality. The writer must impress an acceptance. Enactments of tribal peculiarities must emerge from characters in that society, not interfere with our rec-

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ognition of basic humanity, not be just a concession to quaintness-mongers. Why, for instance, do we accept so easily and unreservedly the accident of the hero's exploded gun especially as a prelude to the final downfall of one of the village elite? Dissected coldly, events that are not part of the dramatic progression of character or other events are instantly suspect. But Achebe has established another pattern, a rhythm compounded not merely of motives but of understated mysteries—mysteries as much to the characters as to their remote observer—of psychical influences on daily routine, of a man's personal *chi,* of initiations, of guilt and purifications whose ethics are not those of a court of law but of the forces of Nature cycle, of the living and the dead. It is a subtle process, and its first principle, faithfully observed by the author, is the philosophy of acceptance. Not blind, slavish acceptance but a positive faith, an acceptance of forces that begin where the physical leaves off.

And within this, a difference of delimitations. For instance, where does a man leave events to his *chi,* to the communal *chi,* and where does he pursue them in defiance of apparent futility? We can respect and be overpowered by the tragedy of the man who destroys himself asserting the latter, but we cannot be anything other than impatient, as for instance in *No Longer at Ease,* with a modern driftwood, manipulated by events and making never a show of resistance. It is imperceptive to allege, as has been done, that the superiority of *No Longer at Ease* is the familiar delusion of exotic backsplash. The escape formula of most African poets and writers is there admittedly, status quo, intrusion and conflict, but Chinua Achebe has added the remaining dimension, individual depth in a credible hero. In a personal confrontation with values and implicit assertiveness that go beyond those of the society—and here is the point, society is not even—Okonkwo's opposition is one that has in fact dictated his actions and his distinct personality in that society. Where the society says: "When a man blasphemes, what do we do? Do we go and stop his mouth? No. We put our fingers into our ears to stop us hearing." Okonkwo retorts: "If a man comes into my hut and defecates on the floor, what do I do? Do I shut my eyes? No! I take a stick and break his head." The apostate Nwoye (through Okonkwo's eyes now), the nine ancestral

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spirits who administer justice in the land, even the lackey-agents of the new order are figures of this book's *moment* and contribute in their separate pressures toward the destruction of the man who became separated from his good *chi*. There is no good and no evil, however, only concepts of continuity—what works for society and what does not. And this knowledge, this magic is achieved from within society itself. The author, understanding this, has excluded all private imposition. He preserved the same integrity in *No Longer at Ease*. He preserved also, ineffectually, the evocative style imposed upon the former book by its framework of nostalgia, of a remote perspective, and total absence—let it be stressed—of sentimentality. Achebe required a stronger, more ruthless approach to create any lasting impression for such an effete character as the hero of his second book. Society emerges rather uncertainly even where it is felt as a corrupting agent. Language lends nobility to the life and downfall of Okonkwo; the same language in *No Longer at Ease* merely rebukes the author, as if he has taken his main character too seriously. It is doubtful if Achebe's forte lies in the ability to spit occasionally, or to laugh from the belly when the situation demands it, but he must learn at least to be less prodigal with his stance of a lofty equipoise. For this has bred the greatest objection to his work, this feeling of unrelieved competence, of a lack of the active spark, inspiration.

Compassion is the twin brother of Mongo Beti's grand iconoclasm (or perhaps what we are looking for is a word that combines the two). *Mission to Kala*, bawdy, riotous, bursting on every page with sheer animal vitality, reads like that rare piece of studied artistry, an unpremeditated novel. In the literary effort to establish the African as, first before all else, a human being, Mongo Beti with this novel has leaped to the fore as the archpriest of the African's humanity. Mongo Beti takes the back cloth as he finds it, asserting simply that tradition is upheld not by one-dimensional innocents, but by cunning old codgers on chieftaincy stools, polygamous elders, watching hawklike the approach of young blood around their harem, by the eternal troublemaking females who plunge innocents, unaware, into memorable odysseys. Hospitality is not, as we are constantly romantically informed that it is, nearly

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so spontaneous. There is a mercenary edge, and this, alas, is not always traceable to that alien corrupt civilization!

Peter Abrahams, Alan Paton, Onuora Nzekwu, William Conton—like the poetasters of the cultural dilemma—one after another they fall down and fail at the altar of humanity because they have not written of the African from the dignity and authority of self-acceptance. Peter Abrahams *(Wild Conquest, A Wreath for Udomo)* is especially something of a marvel in this respect—his black characters do not appear to talk, they use dialogue; they do not argue, they hold disputations. As for feeling, emotion, that is surely an invention of the English greens on Sunday. *Mine Boy* sustains its threat to be an exception until Abrahams's stagy exploration of the black-white relationship reduces his characters to cardboard. Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country* simply debases the gift of sympathy. Nzekwu shares with Conton the gift for fictitious heroes, waiting vainly for human metamorphosis at the magic application of a spurious denouement as dictated by "Literature as a Higher Art." And foreign critics conspire by suspending the meaning of tragedy. Writers like Chinua Achebe, Mongo Beti and lately the South African Alex la Guma are, however, making restoration to the human image of the African. Mongo Beti, unlike the others, has employed the medium of comedy, or as he himself puts it, "my first, perhaps my only love: the absurdity of life." It is a love that many Africans tend to spurn, for it flatly rejects inflation:

> Come and restore
> Again to us
> The dignity
> Of our ancestral past
> The charity of heart
> And benevolence of soul
> Regard for age . . .
> And readiness to use
> Our strength
> To animate the weak.

The lines of a Ghanaian poet. And pure fiction. The ancestral spirits surely enjoyed the irony, for only a few pages away in the same publication the following stage directions appear in a play, *The Council of Abura,* also by a Ghanaian. "A stalwart ruffian

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near-by readily obeys the command and strikes the poor blind face." New dimensions in ancestral animation.

Mongo Beti has made tradition a thoroughly viable proposition. His Kala is the entire sweep of our now familiar back cloth, interpreted faithfully through a most suspiciously exact vein of wonder and participation. He has translated the slight alienation of his hero into village terms, with no condescension, no stances; the magnificent candor of the hero, Jean-Marie Medza, stranger to Kala, creates a vigorous clarity in characters, a precision of edges that Chinua Achebe, with no such uninhibited agent to hand, achieved in neither of his books. Sex is restored to its natural proportions, not a startling discovery made by the European every publishing day, nor a neo-Africanist venture sung by the apostles of negritude and sanctified in shrines to puberty. Beti makes sex an unquestioned attitude; the result is that he demonstrates a truly idyllic love dignified by humor, by pathos, and crucial to the novel as a major factor in the development of a young, sensitive personality.

So, it can be done. Biblical ponderosities in the mouth of black dignity prove, in the end, as unreal as gutturals in the mouth of Hollywood fantasia. And the bald imitation of European *personal* idioms is simply so much schoolboy exercise. Only through the confidence of individual art, like the early Tutuola, through the hurtful realism of Alex la Guma, the sincerity of Chinua Achebe and the total defiant self-acceptance of Mongo Beti, can the African emerge as a creature of sensibilities. These are only a few examples. Idealization is a travesty of literary truth; worse still, it betrays only immature hankerings of the creative impulse.

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The Chink of Grasshoppers?

OWEN HARRIES

AFTER LIVING IN AUSTRALIA for seven years I find that what concerns me most is still Britain. In saying this I do not mean that I am consumed by nostalgia or that I feel a stranger in a strange land. I mean that what worry me most are certain tendencies that seem particularly strong in English intellectual life, or at least in "progressive" and liberal circles there. It is only after looking at Britain from a distance of twelve thousand miles that I have come to recognize these tendencies fully, although now they seem both glaringly obvious and dangerous. A recent visit back there served to confirm rather than to change my impressions. I offer these observations, then, as my contribution to the interminable debate about Britain's role in the contemporary world, a debate that absorbs the British themselves and that is of some interest to others.

Australia is not a bad country from which to observe Britain. It is at the same time both remote and different—twenty-five times as big; empty, hot, dry, subtropical—and intimately linked with Britain. People who have never left Australia speak naturally of England as "Home" and "the Old Country" and recently the Prime Minister, Robert Gordon Menzies, spoke without embarrassment of Australians as being "the Queen's men." Australia has borrowed heavily from Britain; its stock, its language, its laws and legal systems, its political concepts and institutions, its capital, its culture—all these are either wholly or very largely British in origin, which makes it nonsense to talk, as many Australian "progressives" talk, of Australia as being really a Southeast Asian coun-

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try that should "come to terms with the reality of geography." (It is typical of such people that, at a time when technology is conquering distance and making geographical location decreasingly important, and at a time when they themselves, in a different context, emphasize the emergence of "one world," they should seize on whatever argument they can find to weaken Australia's links with the West.) There is enough similarity, then, to make comparison meaningful, and enough difference in atmosphere and point of view to make it profitable.

Perhaps the main differences between the character of public life in Australia and in Britain, it strikes me, are the weakness of liberal tradition in the former and its strength in the latter. In writing this I hesitate, for reasons that I hope will become clear, as to whether I should put quotes around *liberal*, but let it stand without them for the moment. In the case of Australia there is no doubt about this weakness or about its many harmful effects. It is apparent, for example, in the hostility toward minority opinions and eccentricity, for although Australians like to see themselves as hard-hitting individuals who reject the conventionality of older societies, all they have really done is to substitute one sort of conformity, an aggressively egalitarian one, for another, and they become uneasy and frequently hostile when faced with originality, which they tend to equate with pretentiousness. It is apparent, too, in the harsh, intolerant tone of public discussion. There is a tendency to confuse discussion with debate, and debate with quarrel. Parliamentary debates, which are broadcast, are often crude beyond belief to the ear of a newcomer accustomed to the urbane tone of the House of Commons. Again Australians do not on the whole (and there are notable exceptions) have finely tuned consciences on matters of civil rights. The disgraceful treatment of the aboriginal, for instance, passes almost without comment, and despite recent improvements the censorship of books is still one of the least enlightened in the Western world. "She'll do" is a traditional Australianism usually applied to a less than perfect solution of a practical problem; it also seems to apply frequently in the case of social and moral problems: as long as things work more or less well there is not overmuch concern for marginal injustices and imperfections.

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All this is very different from England where intellectuals have developed a sensitive and refined concern for civil rights to the point where it has almost become an art form. Moreover these intellectuals are influential in that they find ready support in a middle class genuinely concerned about and educated in such matters. (It is characteristic of English intellectuals, however, that they give little credit to the middle class for this.) The death penalty, the treatment of homosexuals, censorship, prison reform, racial discrimination—on all such issues English liberalism speaks out strongly and, despite its own complaints about a reactionary Establishment, with considerable effect. Possibly in no country in the world can a man with a grievance find more ready support, and in no country do dissenting voices find a platform so easily, a fact often obscured by their using that platform to protest that they are denied the right to make themselves heard; the "New Left" is particularly adept at this gambit. A characteristic feature of the English scene (look through some back copies of the *Times,* the *Observer,* or the *Guardian* at random) is the "Letter to the Editor" signed by a number of prominent liberal intellectuals and designed to expose and to right some wrong. The point about such letters is that they assume the existence, and the effectiveness, of a liberal conscience in the community and also in the government circles that they are usually attacking. They assume a willingness to listen to and to be influenced by argument. They assume, too, an attitude of respect toward intellectuals as a group. It is equally characteristic of Australia that such letters are hardly known—partly because Australian intellectuals lack the sense of community that would enable them to act together easily in this way and partly because of an awareness that action of this sort on their part would have little effect.

All this represents the more impressive and admirable side of English liberalism. But the advantages are not all one way, for in other ways this liberalism has become a degenerate and ritualistic affair which has done much to enervate intellectual and political life in England. In particular I would say that it has become non-polemical, guilt-ridden and irrational in its attitude toward power.

Genuine liberalism is essentially polemical. It believes that

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conflict, the clash of ideas expressed at their strongest, is essential for the clarification of issues; and as it regards ideas as major causal factors in history it regards such clarification as being important. But much of contemporary English liberalism actively dislikes conflict and the taking up of a position. It is concerned rather to blur issues and to deny differences and it regards the staking of a position as being in some way evidence of intolerance or even fanaticism. A case in point is E. M. Forster, a highly revered figure who would be on many people's short list of great living liberals. Lionel Trilling has written of Forster:

> Yeats, in one of his autobiographies, says that the religious life consists in making all things equal, the intellectual life in saying "thou fool." Forster is impelled precisely in the direction of making all things equal rather than in the direction of "thou fool" and although he frequently says the latter he will usually follow it with the quick gesture of depreciation to imply the former.

One has only to read some of Forster's essays on politics to see how true this is. He tells us that he doesn't believe in belief; that no matter what the color of our shirts we are all naked underneath—as if in some way the color of the shirt is therefore unimportant. His famous dictum "Only connect. . . ." implies that all conflicts are unreal, the product of ignorance and misunderstanding rather than of a genuine clash of interests.

In all this Forster seems to me to typify much of English liberalism particularly in its attitude toward Communism and the cold war, which is frequently ambiguous and evasive. Only too often it seems to take either the view that the cold war is only some vast misunderstanding which can be sorted out with a little goodwill and clear thinking (what after all is faith in Summitry but a contemporary version of "only connect"?) or the view that one side is as bad as the other—which enables the liberal to avoid commitment and to take up a position of neutrality between constitutional democracy and Soviet totalitarianism. This is frequently called "defying the cold warriors of both sides" and those who go in for it like to see themselves as a small, sane, brave minority surrounded by committed fanatics. In fact, in England, it is a highly popular and easy position which requires no courage and involves no stigma. It is a position that has some attraction even for members of the British Government in that it promises a freedom of action,

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a "role," which they otherwise lack. But it is the freedom of the irresponsible.

For this view of liberalism as moderation and uncommittedness is simply false. Liberals are necessarily committed to freedom, which means that on a wide variety of issues, including Communism, they have no option but to take a very definite stand. It is true that while opposing Communism they may also have either to disassociate themselves from and to oppose some other anti-Communist groups that are both anti-Communist and illiberal, or at least to realize that their alliance with those groups is purely provisional and tactical. But there can be no question about being anti-Communist if they are to retain their liberal credentials.

This failure of liberalism, and it is of course by no means exclusively British, has often been ascribed to the particular fascination that the Soviet Union has exercised over the liberal imagination. Dwight McDonald has written of "the region of perpetual fogs, caused by the warm winds of the liberal Gulf Stream coming into contact with the Soviet glaciers." No doubt there is much truth in this, but it is far from being the whole truth. For, quite apart from any particular issue, one strain in the liberal tradition has always tended to deny the reality of conflict and to claim the existence of an underlying harmony (while another has of course always stressed the reality and inevitability of conflict and diversity). And to justify this view there has always been a tendency toward a kind of intellectual togetherness which obscures issues and attempts to avoid the necessity of choice. Thus, quite apart from its ambivalence toward Communism, there is, outside a narrow field, a general bias against strong views strongly stated and against nonconformity. This is as apparent, for instance, in the enthusiasm for "adjustment" in education, and in the support for a "common culture," as it is in the fear of being "fanatical" about Communism. Another factor here, too, is the sheer mindlessness of much English liberalism, a mindlessness that is largely a function of its success. Most English intellectuals are liberals, but they do not behave like intellectuals when they are being liberal. They have become accustomed to having things easy, have become soft as liberalism has become an orthodoxy which does not require a

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spirited and rigorous exposition. Mill in his classic statement of the liberal position speaks of the instances in which a "creed remains as it were outside the mind, incrusting and petrifying it against all other influences addressed to the higher parts of our nature; manifesting its power by not suffering any fresh and living conviction to get in, but itself doing nothing for the mind or heart, except standing sentinel over them to keep them vacant." A better description of liberalism in England at present it would be hard to find. (In America and even in Australia where liberalism has remained a minority creed which has to fight to be heard, it seems to me to be in a somewhat healthier condition.) Having given up hard thought, English liberals have no option but to fall back on a pseudo tolerance and moderation that opposes firm convictions and commitments. If at first you don't succeed, drop it: this seems to be their working principle.

Does all this conflict with what I have said earlier about the willingness of English liberals to speak out strongly on issues like the death penalty, the treatment of homosexuals, censorship and so on? I think not. There seems to me to be a strong element of escapism in the way in which liberals concentrate on these as "safe" issues. There is an almost audible sigh of relief as they turn away from issues on which they are hopelessly compromised to ones on which they can speak out stridently and confidently because there is, among those whose support they value, an overwhelming consensus in favor of certain views. To say that they are seeking compensation is not, of course, to say that their arguments on these topics are bad ones. But some explanation is surely necessary to explain the exorbitant amount of attention given in liberal journals today to these issues—which are certainly important but which are equally certainly not *the* crucial issues for liberals in the contemporary world.

Living in Australia (and perhaps in America) it is easy to grasp the truth of the often-repeated warning about the danger of the "great simplifiers" in the modern world. Issues are too often and too readily reduced to black and white and important distinctions and qualifications ignored. But looking at much of the public discussion in Britain one feels that there is also a case for sounding a

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second warning against the great complicators and prevaricators who refuse to recognize a moral issue when it faces them and who retreat behind a smoke screen of irrelevant distinctions and unexamined conventional enlightenment.

Another characteristic of English liberalism that has often been remarked upon and that I have become increasingly conscious of while in Australia is the importance of a sense of guilt as a motivating force. Australians are particularly free from this, perhaps because the country notoriously suffers from time lags. The last continent to be discovered and settled, a country where animal species that are extinct elsewhere still thrive, it is also a country that still has an almost Victorian confidence in its own righteousness and virtue, and a strong and uncomplicated sense of self-interest. At its worst this gives rise to an unattractive complacency, but in contrast to the self-hate and the determination to see their own society in the wrong that English progressives often manifest I must confess that I find it frequently refreshing.

This sense of guilt is a peculiarly liberal characteristic (having said this I should add that most members of the British Labour Party are more liberal than socialist). The extreme left wing avoids it to the extent that it disowns the society responsible for the deeds that are held to justify guilt (it becomes the accuser not the accused); conservatives are perhaps saved from it by their pessimism about human nature: if you feel that all men are sinful your own sins are unlikely to weigh too heavily on you. Apart from marking its prevalence there are three things worth saying about this sense of guilt. Firstly, it is almost wholly irrational in that it is assumed because of acts that were carried out by others, by previous generations or by other social groups. There is no reason at all why liberals should feel responsible for those acts, unless they assume a social solidarism which is itself the negation of liberalism. This they do assume, and inane phrases like "the burden of our common guilt," applied indiscriminately to Hiroshima, the treatment of colonies and the suicide of Marilyn Monroe, have become the clichés of modern liberal journalism. Secondly, guilt, even when one is guilty, is an unworthy motive for action in that it is an egocentric motive which diverts attention from the issues to one's

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own state of mind. English liberals have received much credit during the last fifteen years for the pressure they have exerted against colonialism. While the results of this pressure have on the whole been beneficial (although it is certainly too early to make a final judgment), I very much doubt whether liberals always deserve the credit bestowed on them, for very often they seem to have been more concerned with assuaging their consciences than with the welfare of the peoples in the colonies concerned. The third effect of this guilt follows from the second. It is that guilt distorts judgments and inhibits valid criticism of those about whom guilt is felt. One has only to witness the moral paralysis of modern liberals in dealing with neutralist countries and with those who claim to be the custodians of "progress" to see the truth of this. Where they should be firm and uncompromising they are often timid and tentative. Australians have recently witnessed an example of this at close quarters as the Indonesians have, under the threat of force, moved to occupy West New Guinea. The liberal response has been an ear-shattering silence.

The debasement of contemporary English liberalism can be seen most clearly in its attitude toward political power. This is complicated and ambivalent. It either grossly underestimates or altogether ignores the power factor and reduces politics to a sort of adult education course; or it abases itself before power and becomes "realistic" in the most cowardly and unprincipled way so that we are constantly being urged to recognize and come to terms with the "necessity" of certain power situations. (See, for example, many of the arguments relating to Berlin.) This exaggeration of the consequences of power is evident in that favorite liberal maxim: "Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely" (the misquotation is both usual and significant). What is common to both these extreme attitudes is the failure to approach power rationally as something that has inevitably to be taken into account in any political situation but that is by no means always intractable.

The classic liberal attitude to power, as expressed by Locke, the Federalists and Jefferson, is neither to ignore it nor to accept it as something about which nothing could be done. It is rather to constitutionalize it, to distribute it and balance it. This view is based

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on a recognition of the importance and danger of political power in human affairs and a recognition of the fact that what threatens liberty is not power as such but the undue and unbalanced concentration of power in one place. Far from ignoring power, these liberals were engrossed with the problem of what arrangement of political power would best serve the interests of liberty. The extent to which what is today called liberalism deviates from this view can be gauged from the fact that the notion of the "balance of power," which is essentially a liberal notion, is regarded by most latter-day liberals as a particularly wicked and unprincipled one. To some extent this attitude is derived from the nineteenth-century theory of a fundamental harmony of interest obscured only by ignorance and individual stupidity. Belief in this theory has been strengthened by the revulsion against modern warfare, although the politics of the last thirty years make it palpably absurd. It may be true that power tends to corrupt but the modern liberal might well be reminded that the absence of power, in a political situation, tends to destroy, especially when the enemy is ruthless and determined.

The most important thing about Britain is still that it is an island. Strategically its insularity is of declining importance; intellectually and psychologically it is still vital. Australia too is an island and a pretty remote one, but it is not as inward turning and self-absorbed as Britain. Part of the difference, I think, arises from the fact that Britain is a great power in decline. For several centuries the British have been accustomed to regarding their country as the center of the civilized world, as a great producer and disseminator of opinions and ideas. The world listened to London and London did not care overmuch about what the world thought. This sort of attitude, because it is largely an unconscious one, is hard to shake off, harder than the habit of regarding England as economically or militarily preeminent, because in those spheres statistics tell the tale. This insularity manifests itself in many ways: in the importance attached to local literary squabbles, in the way in which the New Left "discovers" new truths that were small change of left wing controversy in America and Europe decades ago, in the loss of perspective apparent in the inflated evaluation

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of people like Colin Wilson and C. P. Snow, in the prevalence of an uninformed and unsophisticated anti-Americanism, and in the widespread assumption that, should Britain give a moral lead (there are differences of opinion as to the nature of the lead which is required), the world would eagerly follow. American intellectuals frequently complain, or used to complain, that unlike their English counterparts they do not know their audience, are not sure who is listening to them when they speak. In England on the other hand intellectuals know only too well whom they are speaking to and one gets the sense of the same people having been talking about the same things for much too long. There is a staleness and predictability about public discussions, a claustrophobic atmosphere which is profoundly depressing.

Savage denunciation of their own country has become a popular and profitable pastime for some English intellectuals in recent years. It is often defended as a sign of vigor and on the grounds that self-criticism is always healthy. But there is surely a valid distinction to be drawn between on the one hand rational self-criticism which, while attacking strongly what it condemns, also gives weight to compensating virtues and, on the other hand, a self-hate which manifests itself in using every blemish to denigrate the whole without qualification. Certainly I would not want to be associated with the latter and I would in fact regard the failure of some English intellectuals to give their own country due credit for its many excellences as one of their principal failings (as well as further evidence of their insularity; they just do not know how much worse many things are managed elsewhere). Nor would I want to overestimate either the symptomatic importance or the influence of the attitudes I have been discussing, although I am sure that they are not negligible. Burke warned us that "because half a dozen grasshoppers under a fern make the field ring with their importunate chink . . . do not imagine that those who make the noise are the only inhabitants of the field." This is an important reminder, but the very fact that it is necessary makes the case for exposing even grasshoppers.

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Now Days Are Dragon-Ridden

BALACHANDRA RAJAN

THE SKY OF DECEMBER has its characteristic lucidity. It is a sky purged of the coppery dust of summer. The winter air can be seen through and its clarifying coolness vivifies rather than withers the earth below. A thousand flowers bloom intense and short-lived in every three-hundred-yard garden. The sky of December should be a sky of truth, and to ensure that none of us can avoid thinking our way into whatever the truth is, the Chinese have withdrawn, dragging barbed wire and power generators behind the icy passes so that each man can ascertain the facts of his horizon.

On the Ridge, where British gunners once looked down their sights at the Red Fort, the peacocks dance gaudily in the enlightened morning, and the road winds down past the occasional cobra, to the tranquillity of the University campus. The University is of course a world of its own, although whether it is cut off from reality or merely from Delhi is a matter not easy to decide. Students look wistfully up at the Ridge, but it is uncertain that they see the Thagla Ridge behind it. They listen to radio programs about India and the Dragon, but it is the Dragon of examinations against which they are most violent.

The Faculty of Arts is housed in a stolid brick building that achieves respectability because of its lack of character. It is growing in numbers year by year which means that every year one has to scream a little louder to a still larger class which is more than ever before stonily convinced of the advantages of a liberal education. The students are earnest and the lecturers resigned; but the

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lightning does not seem to flash except in thunderstorms during the long vacations. Yet as one confronts the class, one knows that the truth must begin here if it is to begin at all. If war originates in the minds of men, so also must the response, the counterstatement to war. A democracy must see clearly to defend what it sees with courage. One tries in teaching literature to avoid talking about the objective correlative, but the students are agonizingly aware that this is one of Mr. Eliot's most brilliant inventions and that they are doomed to failure unless they can understand it, or at least misunderstand it in the same way as their examiner. At any rate the phrase provokes one into recognizing that what we need is a subjective correlative, a reorganized understanding of ourselves, so that what we are can be made more directly responsible to the realities we must answer in order to survive.

"Why should we honour only those that die upon the field of battle?" Yeats demands in his typically heightened fashion. "A man may show as reckless courage in entering into the abyss of himself." Even those who do not agree with Yeats entirely can still admit that the reformation of men's minds is a dangerous adventure and there are always those to suggest that no reformation is needed, that the old habits are sufficient for the new challenges. One of our assumptions that needs to be vigilantly examined is the obstinate conviction that progress need consist of nothing more than a perpetual rereading of the past. We may decline patriotically to eat Chinese food in restaurants; but more drastic measures are needed to ensure that we remain immune from the destiny of the mandarins. Yet even more vehement than those who suggest that we do not need to think again, are those who suggest that we do not need to think at all. "Deeds not words" is the characteristic summons and although words are not the same thing as thought and are indeed the classic means of avoiding thought, the confusion is symptomatic enough to call for conscious rejection.

At a time when the whole nation is being mobilized there may seem to be little room for literature which deals only with the whole man. This is a time for the strategic simplification, the shortcut to understanding, the operational half-truth, not for that limited, intensive honesty that can strive only for completeness at

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any price. The content of a mobilized society must be focused sharply on undisputed ends. It cannot afford those sophistications of response that blur and modify its primary images. To insist at such a time on literary ways of apprehension can be little more than an evasion and to record that insistence in terms of a foreign literature is to double one's distance from patriotic reality. We are told these things and there are times when they seem to be true even in the minds and eyes of the students. Yet there are ways in which they are evidently untrue. "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen" is a prescribed poem for graduate students and it is also a starred poem, which means not that it is specially meritorious, but that one is entitled to ask "context" questions about it. But "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen" does not need to be prescribed for it to illuminate the sky of one's truth as tellingly as exhortations or communiques; and, even without the asterisks, it is not merely a text but a context for the times.

With the rough beast slouching toward its Bethlehem across the snows of the Himalayas, the reading of Yeats is not just an imaginative exercise but an acridly passionate reminder of the present. One reads the lines,

> All teeth were drawn, all ancient tricks unlearned
> And a great army but a showy thing

and is shocked by a sense of their pertinence. We too believed that "the worst rogues and rascals had died out." We too played with the "pretty toys" of a peace-oriented society. We too must participate in the angry awakening:

> Now days are dragon-ridden, the nightmare
> Rides upon sleep.

At point after point the poem seems implacable in its reminders of current reality. When we are told that

> Parliament and king
> Thought that unless a little powder burned
> The trumpeters might burst with trumpeting

we are invited to recall other military actions that tested us less than the crisis we are now facing. When one reads

> Man is in love and loves what vanishes
> What more is there to say?

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the lines seem to comment not only on the tragic content of man's relation to earthly ideals and eternal truths, but also with ironic aptness on the lost illusions of some political leaders. One responds to the climax of the second section:

> All men are dancers and their tread
> Goes to the barbarous clangour of a gong

not only as a recognition of the brute truth that is metamorphosed in art, but also as a symbol of our own situation. The gong in the Chinese theatre marks the end of a scene; in the theatre of events it may mark the end of an era.

These connections are exciting to explore, but one must beware of pressing them out of proportion, of driving them to the conclusion that good poetry is always topical, that it says the same thing in depth as the newspapers. What gives "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen" its characteristic quality is the controlled indignation that endows it with form, that rescues it persistently from the abyss. It is a remarkable exercise in poetic brinkmanship but the sense of values is always present in it and is indeed made more intense by the realities which insult it. It is one more reminder that poetry teaches no lessons although it evades no facts. It can and does open a window upon the storm whether the storm be that of Lear or Yeats.

Yeats, a great poet, was also an underrated critic, and in his understanding of tragedy he saw clearly enough that the enduring of the storm was a condition for enhancement of the life-sense: "We begin to live when we have conceived life as tragedy." Later he called for "an act of faith and reason to make one rejoice in the midst of tragedy" and the word "reason" coming between faith and rejoicing is placed with significant accuracy. Yeats's determinist view of history means, of course, that man is never alone in specific folly or specific courage. But it also means that what man is pitted against at any given moment is not individual accident but inexorable pattern, the momentum and force of the whole historical process. The proposition that fate cannot be changed would be difficult to confront were it not for the converse assurance that if that is so, man cannot be changed either. This is "the act of faith and reason" and once we are committed to it, to the conviction of

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man's inherent dignity, unchangeable fate can be used as a poetic hypothesis, a crisis enabling man to affirm his nature.

It is of some importance to insist that Yeats's philosophical propositions are essentially working hypotheses, "diagrams" and "metaphors" for his poetry. These are his own words and are not carelessly chosen. Elsewhere, he observes that one can believe in a myth but only assent to philosophy and it is clearly as the former that he envisages his own "system." The *Geeta* that he thinks of leaving to posterity is characteristically, "not doctrine but song." "Man can embody truth but cannot know it" is almost his last word on the human condition and the statement should serve to remind us that poetry is achieved and not perceived. His distrust of abstractions is emphatic and vivid. Poetry would not move us "if our thought did not rush out to the edges of our flesh." It "bids us touch and taste and hear and see the world, and shrink from all that is of the brain only, from all that is not a fountain jetting from the entire hopes, memories and sensations of the body."

Because poetry is made out of the quarrel with ourselves, Yeats's sense of life discovers itself in a perpetual inner dialogue. Blake believes that without contraries there can be no progress, but Yeats goes further and considers that, even with contraries, there can be no progress but only conflict. His world demands dramatic rather than philosophic understanding: "the east has its solutions always and therefore knows nothing of tragedy. It is we, not the east, that must raise the heroic cry." This is not the place to discuss Yeats's odd view of Eastern philosophy, a philosophy relatively free from dogma, a philosophy committed to experience where ultimate truth is not in seeing but being. The point is that the poetic affirmation, "the heroic cry in the midst of despair," is intended to be dramatic in its nature, the whole man's response, the total counterstatement. Life is experienced in terms of struggle: ironically the struggle of the fly in marmalade, heroically Cuchulain against the "ungovernable sea."

One is prepared to say that Yeats's poetry grows from a tension between extremities even though this particular critical term has had too long and too erratic an inning. The great contraries of time and eternity, the self and the soul, youth and age, art and nature

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and man and his fate, either come together in a living center, in which case great poetry is created, or tear that center apart, so that the consequences are theatrical rather than dramatic, affirmation rather than embodiment. The element of poetry is a place of twilight where three dreams cross and where reality is the result of contrary pulls in one's being. It is not Byzantium or the lapis lazuli mountain but "that dolphin-torn that gong-tormented sea."

Man is the great amphibian, the *nexus et naturae vinculum*, a mixed and dubious animal, who inhabits no land but the no-man's-land of humanity. He can be neither history's unquestioning agent nor Cuchulain, its heroic adversary. Tragic joy, however movingly annotated, cannot be the dominant response in his life, at least not until more ordinary remedies have failed him. Reading Yeats in a time of crisis is a radical if not a liberal education, but like all forms of education its function must be the liberating of the critical intelligence. His best poetry undercuts and reshapes the dialectical extremes of his philosophy and those who read him must also learn to find out the middle and the creative way.

In an emergency the first casualty is likely to be clear thought. The teacher of literature, even in peacetime, underlines the treachery of words and in a time of crisis is even more keenly aware of the slogans, the simplifications, the incantatory repetitions, the accepted devices for short-circuiting and bypassing the mind. Because the reading of literature teaches the habits of total attention, of unrelaxing yet sympathetic alertness, it is a discipline particularly worth urging at those times when it becomes necessary to remind ourselves that eternal vigilance is the price of liberty. And to teach literature is all the more worthwhile because literature, when it is most itself, is never quite the philosophic solution or the heroic cry. Rather, it is an urging of the mind in the direction of maximum openness and the teaching of the power to derive order, form and values from that openness. These qualities of mind remain the mainspring of the democratic process, and the eloquent affirmation in *Areopagitica,* of a righteousness both liberal and militant, has never been so relevant as it is today. Equally, the conviction in *Paradise Lost* that man is responsible for what he makes of himself, and that men making themselves make history between

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themselves, is valid not as a solution, but as a way of response, an imaginative call to moral order.

So far it has been argued that literature inculcates those specific habits of mind that are organic to an open society. The inculcation, of course, is all the more important in countries where democracy is a political institution rather than a way of life. But precisely for these reasons it is *literature* that needs to be taught. The teaching of English in India is now one of those established and expanding problems that envelop committee rooms and provoke compendious reports. Much time has been given to it, but much of the time and nearly all of the technical assistance have been surrendered to the teaching of English as a foreign language, an exotic but unavoidable means of communication. That this is a real problem is obvious and indeed so painfully obvious as to blind one to the recognition that other problems exist. So it is not redundant to suggest that one does not teach English to one's students merely to enable them to write better business letters or even to operate and service an automatic weapon. One teaches them literature because it shows their minds how to grow, how to be open and receptive, yet reasoned and responsible. One teaches them English literature because of certain values in the Western tradition which it is important to keep alive and which find in literature their complete and concrete embodiment.

When a society finds its freedom endangered there is always a tendency to put freedoms in cold storage, to argue that the best way to protect certain values is to make sure that, for the time being, those values are not exercised. The paradox is not even poetic; it is merely and monstrously illogical. If we are not committed to the open mind we may as well abandon the open society. If we accept both we must put up with their operational inconveniences for the sake of what we believe to be their compensating assets. We are now emerging from an experience which it is fashionable to call traumatic. Those who use the word presumably mean that what has happened to us has shaken us to the core. But the word has other and more important overtones: a trauma can only be controlled if it is brought into the open, totally confronted, methodically analyzed and thoroughly understood. In this resolute

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searching of ourselves, we have to look back not in anger perhaps, but certainly not in complacency. Although every nation is a product of its past it must be careful not to be its prisoner.

The lecture is over and the students depart. Some of them have learned nothing although they remember everything. In India much emphasis is placed on the exercise of memory and distinctions are gained in examinations by methodically working out the model answers to all the questions that have previously been asked. What happens next is a function of what has happened already, a forecast in terms of statistical probability. The times have changed now and the horizon is altering. Soon the students will face an examination in which none of the questions will have been set before. They will have no alternative but to think out the answers.

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On the Iberian Concept of Time

GILBERTO FREYRE

IT IS GENERALLY ACCEPTED that the sixteenth-century Iberians acted as pioneer navigators and discoverers with a sense of space —a sense of non-European space—different from that of most Europeans of that century. I am suggesting that, as European settlers in non-European areas, they acted from their first dealings with non-European peoples—peoples of Africa, Asia, America—with a sense or a notion of time different from that of most Europeans of the era of the most important European settlements in the same areas. I know it is out of fashion to speak of space and time separately. I am referring, however, to different historical knowledges of space and time. From this point of view, I am suggesting that in relation to space Iberian navigators were more advanced in their scientific knowledge than most Europeans engaged at the same task; and that in relation to time they were less advanced in their scientific knowledge than most of their European competitors or rivals in the conquest of non-European lands and peoples.

This lag had disadvantages for them of an economic character. But, as I am about to suggest, it possibly had certain advantages of a psychosocial or psychocultural kind.

Professor R. H. Tawney, in his *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism,* suggests that Spain and Portugal did not reap the material harvest of the empires into which they stepped in Asia. To Asia he might have added Africa and remote islands in the Pacific and in the West Indies and, to a certain extent, continental America itself.

In all these areas one might agree with Professor Tawney that Spain and Portugal were mainly the political agents of more astute

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Europeans better versed in the arts of economic exploitation of non-Europeans. Most of the non-European lands where they established themselves did not bring them much material profit; nor had the Spaniards and the Portuguese who conquered these lands for their kings and for the Roman Catholic Church reached a capitalistic and bourgeois phase in their technical and economic development so as to organize themselves, among non-European populations and in the face of Eastern and tropical values desired by European populations, with that efficiency generally associated with capitalism and with a capitalistic *bourgeoisie*.

They were archaic in this and archaic also in their sense of time: a preindustrial sense of time that did not associate time with economic production or with money and so made them satisfied with their slow vessels for the transportation of goods from the East and from the tropics to Europe. It was by developing a more rapid type of vessel for this commercial purpose that the Dutch and the English won a remarkable victory over the Spaniards and the Portuguese in the inter-European competition over Eastern and tropical markets. This is a fact that has not received adequate attention. But it is important and significant.

Even before the invention of the steam engine and the beginning, through express trains, of an Anglo-Saxon cult of speed, quickness of motion and velocity, and, at the same time, of promptness, of punctuality, of the habit of being always exactly on time—never late—North Europeans began to associate their economic activity with the Puritanical notion that "time is money" and money, not something to be looked down upon, but the sign of a prosperity protected by God. The typical Iberian man never followed this almost purely pragmatic, although also religious, philosophy of time.

Naval historians of the British, like James A. Williamson in *The Ocean in English History*, tell us that the first Portuguese navigators in the East simply copied from the Arabs the practice of monsoon sailing. Thus their movements swung to and fro in alternations of six months. It was—I venture to remark—an Eastern rhythm of navigation, with a considerable disregard for promptness, velocity, punctuality. Meanwhile the English and the Dutch, as soon as they began to compete with the Portuguese in the Eastern

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seas, began to follow an entirely novel route, presumably inspired —I suggest—by a North European passion for promptness and velocity already associated with the idea that "time is money." This new route, we are told by Williamson, was quicker and also independent of the seasonal delay of the monsoons. It seems that in the type of vessel used by the Portuguese—the carrack or *naos*—seaworthiness and probably rapidity were sacrificed to bulk: a tendency of the Portuguese and of the Spaniards in all their types of architecture. Possibly their sense of time inclined them to prize bulk as being everlasting and to have a certain disdain for rapidity, as being a perversion of the proper use and enjoyment of time as life: a life to be lived slowly.

It is important to consider how two different and even contradictory notions of time influenced, from the sixteenth century, the behavior of Europeans in Asia, Africa and America, and their relationship with non-European peoples, civilizations and cultures. This contradiction also colored, in an enduring manner, the different consequences of a sociological nature of their imperial contact with these peoples and their cultures.

For it seems to some of us, students of the social and psychological aspects of the contact of Iberians with non-Europeans, that one of the explanations for the relative success, from a human, psychosocial and cultural point of view, of the Portuguese and the Spaniard among these peoples is that their sense or notion of time was not very different from the sense or notion of time dominant among non-European peoples and cultures. The almost religious, Puritanical cult of a strict clock time among North Europeans seems to have been responsible for a psychosocial distance between North Europeans and non-Europeans, which expressed itself, on the one hand, in the disdain of North Europeans for what they considered the laziness and the lack of ambition for material gain among a large number of non-Europeans and, on the other hand, in the unwillingness of non-Europeans to do severe systematic industrial and even agricultural work under a regime of slave labor, especially when this regime was of industrial slavery rather than of patriarchal slavery.

It is true that slavery among the Portuguese and the Spaniards

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who became planters and exploited mines of gold, silver and diamonds in America, Africa and Asia was not always of the patriarchal type. It became, in certain cases, industrial slavery. But it is true also that in this type of activity the Portuguese and the Spaniards were only pioneers: with regard to efficiency they were in most cases sooner or later surpassed by other Europeans who developed more rapid and more profitable methods and techniques of exploiting agriculture and mines in the tropics and in the East.

The Portuguese and the Spaniards were also, if not the pioneers of, the men who made possible a number of industries developed in Europe on the basis of products from the American tropics, from India and from Africa, which they were the first to value as in the case of dyestuffs: dyewoods that produced red and yellow tints, like brazilwood; or the blue extracted from the indigo of India. This is also true of many other tropical products that eventually became the basis for prosperous European industries: sugar, cotton, cocoa, quina, tobacco, for instance. These were values discovered by Iberians, or assimilated by them from non-Europeans. In some cases, the Iberians were the first ones to use these products as part of a new type of civilization in which tropical civilizations and cultures added something so important to European civilization as to give to it a new dimension and to European man new social and cultural possibilities.

Modern social historians agree on considering the so-called Industrial Revolution, which produced the world in which we live today, an immense quickening of industrial activity. Industrial activity in a new rhythm. Human life in harmony with clock time rather than with nature or with tradition associated with nature.

We should not forget, however, that the Spanish and Portuguese activities in Asia, Africa and America made possible this new type of industrial production by giving to European capitalism and bourgeois industrialism, material for manufacture in a new scale and in a new rhythm. Not long ago a British historian acknowledged this, in a very clear statement: "We may regard the industrial age"—he wrote—"as a fruit of the enterprise set going by Columbus and Henry the Navigator."

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It is true that neither the fellow countrymen of Columbus nor those of Henry the Navigator fully participated in the technical and economic revolution that was the fruit of a typically Iberian enterprise and of a typically Iberian way of assimilating values from non-Europeans. That revolution was the expression—at once a cause and an effect, as a now fashionable method of sociological and historical interpretation would put it—of an attitude toward time on the part of North Europeans that was absolutely different from the Iberian attitude. This attitude considered only in its psychocultural aspect—not taking note of the fact that the presence of coal and iron was a basic condition for the development of modern industry in the northern part of Europe—may be owing to some extent to a cold climate, which may have been responsible as a stimulus, especially when modern methods of heating were unknown, for a quickening of activity in men. But it was probably stimulated, also, by the Protestant religion which, since the sixteenth century, had been another and perhaps correlated influence for rapid activity among North Europeans, through the ethical and religious idealization of the active, efficient, prosperous, quick, never idle or even delayed, business or industrial man, to whom obedience to clock time became almost a part of his religious rites.

Historians and sociologists who emphatically write that Spain and Portugal displayed, in their contacts with Asia, Africa and America, only military and Catholic energies of a high but romantic, unpractical type, seem to forget that it was as a result of their more prosaic activities as colonizers of Asiatic, African and American areas, and as founders of Euro-tropical industries developed in a slow rhythm of production, that it was possible for Europe to go through some of the most important phases of what is known as the Industrial Revolution. For their failure to participate fully in this Revolution there may be found a number of explanations but this psychocultural one should never be neglected: their sense of time was an obstacle to their participation in that revolution. On the other hand, it was, since their first contacts as Iberians and as Christians with Negro Africans, Asians and Amerindians, an advantage for these contacts, from the psychosocial point of view of facilitating their intimacy with these peoples and

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their contact with non-European cultures in a way that was not possible on the part of North Europeans.

This advantage is not to be measured in terms of a purely Iberian advantage although it certainly contributes to explaining why the Iberians have given to many of their colonies conditions for developing into real nations. It seems also to contribute to explaining why these nations have remained fundamentally Iberian in the European and, in some cases, the civilized part of their national structures. The advantage I refer to is to be measured in terms of a panhuman development of cultural and ethnic interpenetration, much more extensive and intensive in the tropical areas, African, Asian and American, that have been colonized—provided that this is the exact word—by the Spaniards and the Portuguese, than in the ones colonized by the English, the Dutch, the French.

It is not insignificant that, in their sense of time, the sixteenth-century Iberians were rather Christians with something Eastern in their way of being Christians and of being semi-Europeans—socially and culturally semi-Europeans—than orthodox Europeans who had begun to be, like the North Europeans, predominantly bourgeois: an industrialist and capitalist type of civilized man. This type of European, who is here considered socially and culturally orthodox, was, paradoxically, Protestant in his religion and in his ethical behavior; his Protestantism contributed to his cult of clock time as a part of his methodical, systematic activism. The Catholic Iberian, in contrast to the socially and culturally orthodox European who reached his maturity through the Industrial Revolution, may be, paradoxically, considered from this sociological point of view a heretical European.

Not many years ago, a British university scholar who became a specialist in the study of Iberian peoples and languages reached the conclusion that in places like Valencia the people seem to be so disdainful of anything fixed that an outsider has the impression that time, according to these people, is really made, as some Iberians are inclined to consider it, for cats and dogs, not for men. This British university scholar would agree with other observers of Iberian life that, for a real Iberian, time is the servant,

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not the master, of men; and according to him, as well as to other students of the Iberian culture, it was the Arab who contributed to the development among Iberians of the tendency to leave the future to work out the preconceived pattern of God—in this particular respect more like Allah than like the Christian God. Hence the Iberian's "detachment," his disdain for chronometric time, capitalistic money, and all the "customary symbols" of what the typical West European has considered, in the last two centuries at least, the real "well-being" of men and of nations. The Iberian attitude may have been, for Professor Atkinson and for other North European analysts of Iberia, thirty years ago "the very antithesis of the spirit that informs our present age"; but—I dare to suggest—it is not so any more.

Automation has given to the West European and even to the Anglo-American conception of human well-being a different direction, with leisure as a tremendous reality that instead of meaning an economic and an ethical deficiency in human culture and in social organization, means social and cultural development on a higher plane. For it means—some modern social philosophers and social scientists are inclined to think—social and cultural development to a point that makes organization of labor or idealization of constant toil for increasing production and dependence of economic production upon clock time in so extreme a way signify also a constant sacrifice of the present to the future. Extreme idealization of toil has become an archaic tendency. Therefore, it is not the Iberian conception of time that is now archaic, with regard to the most advanced forms of civilized life, but the Anglo-Saxon conception that went to the extreme of identifying, not only in Europe but in the imperial activities of Europeans in Africa, Asia and America, time with money.

The Iberian sense of time seems to be one explanation for the fact that, for the Spaniards and for the Portuguese in their activities both in Europe and overseas, persons and things have been not only what they seem to be but seen, considered and treated through what an able interpreter of Iberian psychology, apparently applying a medieval philosophical saying, has described as "a double truth," that of the immediate detail—an

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objective, realistic truth—and that of the poetic whole: a truth that includes an interpretation of things and persons as constant, through extremely slow development in a triad—past, present and future. It was because they saw Africans, Asians, Amerindians, both as a poetic truth and as an immediate truth, and acted according to a double vision of these non-European realities that the Portuguese as well as the Spaniards were, from the beginning of their activities in Africa, Asia and America, more creative than other Europeans engaged in similar activities. The Iberians had the courage not only to build a monumental city like Goa, in India, in the sixteenth century, but to build fortresses, universities, cathedrals and entire cities in America and in Africa that have survived, as monuments and institutions, a severe conflict with tropical climate and with non-European social time. They have also established themselves in tropical spaces, believing, in a way more poetic than scientific—although also scientific, in some cases—in the possibilities of developing enduring cultures or permanent civilizations in these spaces, through a bold mixture of men and cultures: the ones taken from Europe to Asia, Africa and America and the ones found outside Europe.

What did the English, the Dutch, the French see in a population of naked Amerindians like the one that was found by Europeans in Brazil? Nothing but an inferior people who aroused no interest in progressive Europeans. What did the Iberians see in them? A people who when a Mass was said in their presence in a forest gave the Portuguese the impression of taking a lively interest in that Christian demonstration of religion and culture. Consequently, Christians and civilized persons in potential. At the same time the brown Amerindian women were considered beautiful by the newcomers: such brown women reminded the Portuguese of some of their own women with Moorish blood.

"That which I plainly perceive to be Mambrino's helmet, seems to thee to be only a barber's basin and perhaps another man may take it to be something else," Don Quixote once told Sancho. Never was a merely realistic vision of persons and things put under a sharper analysis than this one, by a Don Quixote who, like some other psychopaths, had something in him of a shrewd

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psychologist. Of the European or rather sociologically Christian vision of extra-European persons and things that has made the series of contacts of the Iberians with Africans, Asians and Amerindians, a greater sociological or human success than similar contacts of other Europeans with the same non-European peoples, it may be said that it has been a Quixotic poetic vision completed, but not dominated, by a Sancho-realistic one.

Other Europeans were more successful from an economic point of view in their dealings with non-Europeans than were the Iberian pioneers, to whom they soon became superior, through their higher efficiency of technique in matters of transportation, economic production and military action. But this superiority, although expressed in a number of cases in a very rapid tempo or in a rhythm of "time is money," would prove inadequate to survive sociologically in a non-European space and in a non-European or rather panhuman, social time. In this field it was to be surpassed by the creative activity of the Iberians in non-European areas and among non-European peoples. Some of these peoples, mixed with Iberians or with descendants of Iberians, or led by Iberians or descendants of Iberians, more than a century ago organized themselves in nations or quasi nations, which, although politically independent from Spain and Portugal, have remained sociologically attached to Spain and Portugal in a way that is not true of former colonies of other European nations. Such an attachment includes an identification with an Iberian sociologically significant notion of social time that, although inadequate to an industrial civilization based mainly on well-organized human labor, seems to correspond better than the strictly Anglo-Saxon notion of time to a civilization based on automation, and whose destiny will probably be very different from the one that deterministic Marxist or near-Marxist ideas ascribe to the human future.

Again one is reminded here of an Iberian philosophy of life, inspired by a traditional Iberian idea of man's relation to time. It may be said that the time that has come to be analyzed, in the twentieth century, by Bergson, the philosopher, and popularized by Proust, the historian-novelist, and according to which time is

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experience rather than nature, complex existence—physical, psychological, cultural—rather than a mere expression of mechanics and physics, is similar to that traditional Iberian philosophy.

"What are you painting?" was Don Quixote's question to a man he saw painting nobody knew exactly what. It might turn into a man, into a woman, into an animal, into a tree, into a house, into a church. Or into a combination of all these images in a symbol. "That is as it may turn out," was the very Iberian answer of a painter whose art was an expression not of a preconceived idea that was to be put into practice in a preconceived period of time, but of a vital, free, existential, creative relation between the Artist and Time itself. The same sort of existential, free, non-systematic relation between creative art and creative time has resulted in some of the most characteristic masterpieces of Iberian literature. *Don Quixote* is certainly an example of this and we know that of Tirso de Molina, of Calderón, and even of Lope de Vega, foreign critics have written that their plays are "wanting in system." The same might be said by a Boileau of the unacademic works of Santa Teresa de Jesus and of the equally unacademic pages of *Peregrinaçam* of Fernão Mendes Pinto.

And if one goes from the field of art to that of sociological achievement in what is now Iberian America, in what are the various extensions of Iberian culture or civilization in Asia and Africa, one finds that all of them are also wanting in system; all of them have suffered, or are still suffering, as much from a lack of technical correctness as of sociological constructions, just as *Don Quixote* suffers from it as an artistic creation. There have been in all these Iberian achievements, both artistic and sociological, what foreign critics of Iberia and foreign interpreters of Iberian *ethos* generally agree in describing as "improvisation." It is, however, gradual improvisation, and, as such, an improvisation that has meant, in many cases, the sacrifice of systemization, planning, methodological precision, artistic correctness, to a constant and direct contact of man, through time, with life and nature. Through this contact, the artist, the statesman, the philosopher, the plain man, has usually developed, within the Iberian culture, an art or a philosophy or, simply, has lived a life, according to

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what experiences time brings to him. Exactly like the painter who gave Don Quixote that very Iberian answer: "This is as it may turn out."

"Is it not a danger to Christian Civilization to allow race mixture between whites and blacks?" This is a question that the Dutch in South Africa and the English in the Rhodesias have asked themselves since their first contacts with Africa; and afraid of the new colors and the new shapes of men and of culture that would result from free human contacts of this type, they have developed a systematic policy of segregation, similar to the one that since the Civil War has been also a systematic policy of the United States. But in Iberian America as well as in Iberian Africa the tendency in this field, as in other ones, has been to admit and even seek new colors and shapes: "This is as it may turn out." As it may turn out with time.

Paradoxically, however, the Iberians were among the first Europeans to take clocks to the East. But they did so, accommodating their culture to non-European values and attitudes in regard to time. It is interesting for a modern student of the early relations of Iberians with non-Europeans in the East to consider the fact that the Jesuits—some of them Italian and German, but not a few of these non-Iberian Europeans trained in Lisbon or in Portuguese Goa and thus Iberianized—who developed in China a policy of accommodating Christianity to Confucian philosophy, were accused by French Catholics and Protestants, by Dominicans and even by orthodox Jesuits, of unorthodox attitudes in China, precisely with regard to matters connected with the relations between Man and Time. They were accused not only of smuggling religion into China through intelligent attempts at harmonizing European mathematics and astronomy with Chinese astrology, but also of accommodating Christian ideas regarding time to Oriental astrology.

Goa, with the Portuguese, in India, became a center less of Portuguese and even less of European influence in certain areas of the East, than of Christian influence in the whole Eastern world. It did not develop in India as a monumental, imperial, European city but as a city that soon became a combination, a

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vigorously hybrid expression, of European and Eastern art and architecture, with a population whose Europeans soon adopted from the Asians, Eastern styles of dress, Eastern food, Eastern dances and festivals and even that Eastern or oriental rhythm of talking, walking, dancing, that is an expression of a non-European philosophy of time. They adopted these values and these rhythms, instead of trying to remain imperially and purely European, in their styles of dress, their food habits, their dances, their art, their architecture, their sense of time, as the British did in the same area—India—and the Dutch have done in South Africa and the French did in North Africa.

The Spaniards and the Portuguese have been the only Europeans with an influence over non-European areas who have not emphasized, in their contacts and dealings with non-Europeans, either their *European-ness* or their condition as a progressive people who, having attained what some Europeans have considered the perfect social time—the rapid, quick one—in relation to production in industry and transportation of persons and goods, military technique, education, architecture, agriculture, medicine, would not or should not accept any values or techniques from non-Europeans, or consider the archaic non-Europeans their equals. The Iberians greatly emphasized, during the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries when their systematic contacts with non-Europeans began, their Christian condition, putting it above—as a sociological condition—their European or national condition. Not that they were better Christians than the other Europeans, who competed with them in commercial dealings with non-Europeans. But because they felt, as a result of their long conflicts with non-Christians in their own European lands, that they were, sociologically, Christians rather than Europeans, or members of a progressive European culture. They presented themselves to Amerindians, Asians and Africans, mainly as Catholic Christians, whose notion of social time was not so much that of a constantly progressive rhythm—as the European time had become since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution—but a fusion of past, present and future; not so much a time fit to continuous work, with only the Sunday dedicated to rest, but a time with

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much alternation between work and leisure, toil and dance, provided by the Church itself. It is easy to understand why time, so understood, was the basis for an understanding between the Spaniards or the Portuguese and non-European populations, in Asia, Africa, America, that was never reached, except by unusual individuals, by the British or by the French or by the Dutch in their dealings with the same populations.

As to *European-ness,* as it was developed by the British, the French and the Dutch, in their Asian, African and American colonies through exclusive clubs, special schools, special educational facilities for Europeans, special sports, special restaurants, special hotels, special churches, special gardens and parks—also only for Europeans—it became a pan-European systematic exclusiveness on the part of North Europeans, in a way never known, conceived or practiced, except by unusual individuals or unusual groups, in the Spanish and Portuguese colonies in the same Asian, African and American areas. It is a phenomenon to be connected, not only with the North European particular conscience of race, but with their sense of being representatives of a superior civilization in which quick time and quick activity are values greatly characteristic of a superior civilization. This, however, is a sense of progressive time at which the Iberians never become adept. Hence the disdain of North Europeans themselves for Iberians for not having followed them, North Europeans—except through exceptional individuals or subgroups—in this very important aspect of *European-ness:* a sense—or, more than a sense, a cult, a *mystique,* almost a religion—of progressive time.

How is man affected in his behavior by what may be considered a cult of progressive time? How much of an advantage—and not only of a disadvantage—has been for the typical Iberian man, his now traditional disregard for progressive time? Automation seems to favor the Iberian sense of time: the notion that time is not money, included.

In his book, *Le Mythe de l'éternel retour: archetypes et répétition,* originally published in Paris in 1949 and recently, in English, under the title *The Myth of the Eternal Return,* Mircea Eliade refers to societies characterized by a revolt against concrete,

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historical, continuous time, on the one hand, and on the other hand by what the author describes as "a certain metaphysical 'valorization' of human existence," different from the Marxist, the Existentialist as well as the Hegelian types of valorization, and to be explained only by an anthropological approach to the so-called "primitive" man and to Oriental philosophy. Such an interpretation seems to be necessary to a fuller understanding of the Iberian or Hispanic Man and of his sense of time: of all his traits, perhaps, the one that has contributed in the most powerful way to make of him, as a European, and of the civilizations he has developed outside of Europe, exceptions, rather than orthodox expressions of *European-ness*. He is un-European and akin to primitive and Oriental men in his tendency to escape from historical time, as understood by Europeans, by living in that "repetition of cosmogony" that Eliade considers "the creative act *par excellence*."

The fact that Iberian civilization remains, to a large extent, in Europe and has developed, outside Europe, in combination with Oriental, African and Amerindian civilizations and cultures, a civilization, or a group of civilizations in which the predominant attitude of men toward time is greatly affected by myth, religion and folklore instead of having been dominated, almost entirely, since the Industrial Revolution, by a scientific vision or outlook of continuous activity as historical progress, seems to place the Iberian man and the civilization that he has developed in such a slow rhythm as to be considered archaic by progressive Europeans and Anglo-Americans, in a unique position to emerge as a creative, instead of simply a technically and scientifically progressive, civilization. Creative in the sense of the most typically Iberian or Hispanic men being capable, as only Oriental and primitive men seem to be capable, at present, of "beginning each year anew, a 'pure' existence, with virgin possibilities," as Eliade puts it, in his analysis of what he calls "archaic" or "traditional man," as opposed to "modern man." The advantage of this "archaic" or "traditional" man would be, especially, in the possibility of his being always creative through his identification with a time that "begins each year anew," thus escaping from history in its strict sense and escaping even from a logical cause and effect relation-

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ship. His time being existence rather than history. His time being a series of mythical rituals connected with the renewal of life—qualitative life—rather than a series of logical and quantitatively valuable activities.

We are told that traditional calendars have had a tendency to make the ritual meaning of festivals fit the seasons that express renewal of life in a way at once biological and mythical: biocosmic. It seems that the Christian calendar has been followed for centuries by the Iberian Catholics in a way that has meant an intimate association of the ritual meaning of religious, popular festivals with a whole conception of life: exactly the conception of life that has made it possible for the Iberian or Hispanic man to find something in common between his feeling for time and the Chinese, the East Indian, the African, the Amerindian feelings for time. Exactly, also, the feeling for time and the way of dealing with time that gives to the Iberian, or Hispanic, man, more than to any other European, the position of marching to an epoch, now so close to Europe and to the United States, of automation and leisure, with "virgin possibilities" in regard to time as a triality, made of three separate but—as a modern philosopher, Ernst Cassirer, developing St. Augustine's idea on the subject puts it—"ontically related substances": memory, intuition, expectation.

These three attitudes in regard to time are certainly present in the Iberian or Hispanic Man in a very characteristic way. His capacity for expectation—an aspect of the Iberian *ethos* that has been considered and interpreted by some of the best analysts of the Iberian or Hispanic Man, the greatest of all, among the modern ones, being, I think, Professor Americo Castro—seems to explain the Iberian or Hispanic Man's disregard for chronometric time, his frequent inclination to depend upon the "next day" or "tomorrow," his famous patience, so irritating to Anglo-Saxons—to Anglo-Saxons almost religiously adept at chronometric time—who have to deal with Iberians in Europe and with descendants of Iberians in countries like the republics of Spanish America, Brazil, Goa, Angola.

On the other hand, the interpenetration of cultures that has been characteristic of most of the contacts of the Iberians with

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non-Europeans seems to have had, as one of its basic conditions, a sort of secret alliance between most Iberians and most non-Europeans, with regard to time, while the British bureaucracy, in most areas of what was until recently the politically very well-organized British Empire, ruled over natives from rooms where secular, scientific, technical, mechanical clocks were an expression of the superiority of European industrial civilization over non-European cultures. This happened in some of those parts of the non-European world where the Iberians have represented and still represent a sociologically Christian civilization, not by means of clocks but of church bells, ringing not every hour, but in the morning, at midday and at the end of the evening. In this way they have acted and still act as a connection between two rhythms of life that are, in some cases, almost the same. This seems to help one to understand why India and Anglo-India, Africa and British Africa, Indonesia and Holland, the Belgian Congo and the Congo, never met in regard to attitudes toward time as an expression of life in the same way as the Spaniards and the Filipinos, the Portuguese and the Africans, the Iberians and the Amerindians, have met in a number of cases.

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When Politics Is Harder than Physics

JULIUS STONE

THE QUESTION OF THE RESPONSIBILITY of those who dedicate themselves to the extension of knowledge has many aspects, aspects of ethical and political theory as well as practice. Many of them have had earnest and sometimes emotional and often noble discussion in the fateful war years, and the public debates have been unending since Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Our instant peril, in the particular case of nuclear weapons, is the mature fruit of two radically opposed principles—the claim of absolute freedom of inquiry of the individual human mind, on the one hand, and the claim of absolute authority of the state, on the other. And the strange unity of these violently conflicting principles lies in this, that both of them, each in its way and in its sphere, asserts itself as paramount over the moral sense of any individual, including the scientist himself and the agent of the state himself as *human beings*. And this is none the less true if we admit that truth itself is one moral value, and that science pursues it; and if we admit that state objectives are generally asserted as morally based, or that these may include the very self-preservation of the state.

This paper deliberately seeks a focus that is in most respects narrower and sharper than earlier discussions. This narrower focus is on the responsibility of a scientist at that moment when he envisages that, as a probable result of his pursuit of a particular line

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of work, humanity is likely to be faced with a choice between some obviously unachievable transformation of its powers of self-control and self-organization, and near-certainty of destruction. It is important, at the outset, to make explicit some of the more familiar questions that this narrow focus can exclude.

First, we are not concerned with the question of the responsibilities of the scientists for the good or evil consequences of the expansion of knowledge generally. We do not intend therefore, by anything we here say, to take a position on Dr. James B. Conant's suggested "Hippocratic oath" for scientists to ensure that scientific knowledge is used "in a way which will be beneficial to mankind." And we certainly are not joining in other proposals that "scientific research is not to be undertaken in cases where the results are likely to be used for 'bad' ends." We are raising the question of responsibility only for a certain kind and degree of evil consequence, one constituting a limit-situation for the human race. This kind of consequence has thus far only had to be envisaged by informed minds in our own time, and as yet only in relation to a few lines of scientific work. But it is not to be dismissed as merely a problem of the accelerated extension and use of knowledge.

Second, and consequentially, we in no way intend to derogate from the ethical propriety *for past ages* of the traditional view that the extension of knowledge for its own sake is, without any qualification, a justified activity, and, indeed, that it is the duty of the dedicated scholar not to be diverted from it by speculating on the good or evil uses to which his fellowmen will put his discoveries. We are concerned rather to raise the question whether in our age when the evil envisaged constitutes a limit-situation that traditional view should not be reexamined and subjected to qualification.

Third, we are not concerned to jettison, even for our own age, the traditional view that responsibility for the application of knowledge rests on society in general and not on the scientist as a scientist. Our question is merely whether this view should receive some qualification.

Fourth, we are to consider here the possibility of such a limiting qualification for the protection of mankind generally. We are not

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suggesting that any such qualification should be admitted in the interests of any individuals or lesser groups of men, whether organized nationally or otherwise.

Fifth, it should go without saying that we are only concerned with the duties of the scientist as a scientist, regardless of his national affiliation, and regardless of the field of knowledge to which he dedicates himself. And while most discussions of the scientist's responsibility have thus far been concerned, naturally enough, with the physical sciences, the principles involved apply to all fields of knowledge.

Sixth, we must emphasize that when we speak of limit-situations for mankind we have in mind only *proximate* prospects of either the physical destruction of substantially all mankind, or the absolute subjection of substantially all mankind to a few men who command certain means put in their hands by the extension of knowledge. Words such as "proximate" and "substantially" leave an area of peripheral doubt. But we hope that they make clear that we do not regard as limit-situations mere philosophical assertions of the indivisibility of evil, or of the inexorable growth of evil unless man himself changes. The mere fact, too, that some may see science and technology as the symbol, or very cause, of man's impending destruction or enslavement, does not (in our view) constitute a limit-situation. The probability of physical destruction or absolute subjection must for our purpose be based on the existing state of secular knowledge, not mere prophetic insight, even if it is the insight of a Samuel Butler or a Karl Jaspers.

This means, of course, that any qualification now made on the duty to extend knowledge might, if such prophecies prove true, amount to shutting the stable door after the horse is gone. But to remove all risk would require us not only to forbid any further extension of knowledge, but also somehow to blackout the accumulation of the past. We agree with Jaspers that even if we could conceive this as possible it would be a senseless way of ensuring the survival of man. The backtrack of Samuel Butler's Erewhonians is simply not open to deliberate human choice, although we cannot exclude it as a fate that might be forced on us by a disastrous use of the new weapons.

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Perhaps we ought here to add that no one can be sure that, even if all scholars concerned recognized some new imperative, the risks already before us would not mature. Norms for conduct distinguish good from evil courses; they have no magical power to undo what is already done, or what others may do.

Seventh, with our focus on the responsibility of the scientist for certain kinds of consequences of his activity, the questions involved arise *for the scientist* only from the moment that he envisages the probability of those kinds of consequences. From such a moment, however, the questions raised may touch not only the possible duty to refrain from pressing a line of inquiry further, but also the dissemination of knowledge.

Even within this limited focus we need perhaps to sharpen certain further points. The first question is whether or not any qualification at all even at the present stage in human history ought to be admitted on the duty and liberty to pursue knowledge. This is the primary question to which these pages are devoted.

The second question, assuming a positive answer to the first, concerns an appropriate formulation of the standard to express such a qualification.

A third group of questions, all on the same assumption, concerns whether the individual scientist would wish to be left, and should be left, to apply this standard privately, consulting, of course, such friends and colleagues as he may choose. Or whether he would wish, and should be given the means of seeking, guidance from some kind of standing advisory group to aid judgment on such momentous matters. Even a scientist who says with Norbert Weiner: "I am acting as the censor of my own ideas, and . . . I will not accept a censorship in which I do not participate," may still welcome the comfort of such counsel. There might also be questions whether, how far, and in what form, the community generally should participate in this counseling. Some aspects of such problems (for example, how far it is sensible to expect successful human adaptation to face a given cataclysmic potential of the new development) may be matters for lay wisdom, or for that of sciences (notably psychology) other than that immediately concerned. Earlier

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discussions of some of these matters in the overwide context mentioned above are inconclusive for the present narrower issue.

A fourth group of questions surrounds the responsibility of a scientist for a concrete decision already taken. These should, perhaps, be left to the conscience of the individual scientist. If they were not so left, however, questions analogous to those of professional ethics and discipline would arise, but of course of a radically new kind. These cannot here be further discussed.

The responsibility of the scientist, even within the narrow but vital area here under discussion, is predicated on his recognition of the limits of human adaptability within the timetable set by the threat of evil his work may unleash. Taken literally, this would often exempt scientists from responsibility exactly in proportion to their shortfall in understanding the affairs of the larger society of which they are a part. For, as Robert Oppenheimer, writing in *Encounter,* has recently recalled, specialized traditions in scholarship flourish today as never before; knowledge is rich in its private beauties, but impoverished in "those high undertakings when man derives strength and insight from public excellence," and this default is connected with "the great unresolved public problems—survival, liberty, fraternity."

It is tempting to hope, as Oppenheimer does, that the intellectual community will be able somehow "to reknit the discourse and the understanding between the members of our community" by a new dedication of expanding leisure. To this end, he thinks we are all bound to "preserve our competence in our own professions, to preserve what we know intimately, to preserve our mastery. This is in fact our only anchor in honesty." Intellectuals must preserve this specialization moreover (he seems to say) not merely while learning what we should about "the unresolved public problems," but also while learning to be "open to other and complementary lives," and shed our fear and contempt of them.

These are great perplexities. Solutions that are merely verbal may give us, as individual scholars, considerable personal comfort, while leaving undiminished the dangers both to the *patria* and the dreamed of *civitas maxima.* We venture, therefore, to express the

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doubt whether it is really possible to most individual intellectuals, *after they have become specialists*, to open themselves to "complementary lives" to the degree that Oppenheimer implies is necessary. But the alternative, that we first have to learn to live in the open house of knowledge, may be no less difficult. Sonorous plans for "general education" have been tried at great universities in the last two generations. They have not prevented our arriving where we are.

It is commonplace, of course, that the consequences of scientific discovery and invention are usually foreseen only after the fundamental knowledge has already been gathered. It is no less commonplace that pieces of knowledge decisive for particular applications are often attained by scientists working quite *alio intuitu,* or with no *intuitus* at all save that of learning something that happens to be in their path. Yet this does not mean that the question here raised is relevant *only* to technical knowledge and technical execution, and not to fundamental sciences. That the production of atomic weapons was likely to create a limit-situation for human survival was recognized not merely when the weapons were first used, nor when their production was first undertaken in the Manhattan Project, nor when that undertaking was first pressed on the President by Albert Einstein, but also for some years before these events, when the fundamental knowledge necessary to base the technology had still to reach full adequacy.

No doubt the weight of the question does rest on technological science, but the testing case of the scientist who envisages a "limit-situation" for humanity resulting from his further pursuit of a particular line of inquiry may also, although more rarely, arise in the basic area.

We agree, in short, with C. Daniel and A. M. Squires that from the aspect of knowability of consequences there is no rigid line between "pure science" and "technology." Nor, as we shall further show, can the position be accepted that all work in the basic area must lead proximately to the kind of limit-situations here under discussion.

For the present purpose, if prediction *is ever possible at all,*

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the issue with which we are concerned *may* present itself. What is involved is a question to the particular scientist concerning his own foresight and his own future action; and this question must be answered before the further question arises, what (if anything) can he do about it?

That the men who extend knowledge may often not envisage any specific use of it until the knowledge required for this use is well advanced, is deeply relevant. For the state of knowledge, and the *lacunae* to be filled to make it usable, are in scientific tradition open to scientists everywhere in the world, through books, journals and oral transmission. Any suggestion that a scientist should in some circumstances refrain from taking that last step, which he may perceive to be likely to lead to the limit-situation, is immediately met by a serious objection. For if *this* scientist does refrain, will not the fateful step in knowledge still be taken *by other scientists,* for whom all the necessary chartings already lie in the public area of knowledge?

How far does the argument, "If I don't take this step, others will!" dispose of the kind of question we are raising? Here, too, the apparently single objection may mean any of four things.

1. In a situation where the conduct in question violates an admittedly binding norm whether of law or morals, the meaning is: "If I do not produce these evil consequences by violating the norm, someone else will produce them by violating it." This argument is unacceptable. It was, of course, a main argument of Robert Servatius on behalf of Eichmann, when he expressly argued that if Eichmann were guilty of the abominable massacres of six million men, women and children, so were the nuclear scientists whose work made possible the mass killings at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. To analogize the position of the atomic scientists to that of Eichmann is basically false; it proceeds either (in the mouth of Eichmann's counsel) from special pleading, or (in more sincere mouths) from loose thinking which is equally valueless. For, on the one hand, positive law and morality have long distinguished between acts of war among states, and cold-blooded massacres of masses of human beings outside the relations of war. On the other hand, there was no clear norm of either law or morals that was violated

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by the scientists concerned in the Manhattan Project. Nor is there one now. The question here under inquiry is precisely *whether we should in the exercise of wisdom establish such a norm.*

2. A second meaning of the words, "If I don't, others will!" is that the scientist's own state, in a power struggle in which the new discovery may be decisive, has decided to take the step in question, and that even if the speaker refrains from further work (possibly at the cost of his career), the step will still be taken by colleagues available to replace him.

3. If this second meaning stood alone it would be only a weak reason for not imputing a share of responsibility to the scientist as a scientist. Usually, however, this second meaning is closely entangled with a third. If the protesting scientist and his national fellow-scientists do not cooperate in making the weapon available against the enemy, the enemy's scientists will make the weapon available for use against the protestant's side. This was the basis, in Einstein's belief (although not, as it turned out, in fact), on which he finally succeeded in activating the United States Government to launch the Manhattan Project. This element of self-protection in the scientist's step onto the path known to lead to a limit-situation increases the difficulty of imputing responsibility to him, especially because it sets up between the scientists of opposed nations a chain of reciprocal justifications, leading to—for example—today's theories of preemptive nuclear attack in "self-defense."

4. The present focus is on the fourth meaning. We assume that no other breach of any existing norm of law or morality is involved. We also assume that a norm newly established could address with equal effectiveness all the scientists of all nations. And we also assume that the risk that some addressees of the norm will break it can be held to small dimensions. Our question is whether it would be wise and even desirable to issue some qualification on the duty and liberty of men to extend knowledge to a point creating limit-situations for mankind as a whole. In answer to such a question, on such assumptions, the plea, "If I don't, others will!" still leaves us facing the question of principle whether scholarly traditions concerning the extension of knowledge can and should suffer some qualification.

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The defense secrecy clamped down on the atomic scientists is not, of course, an answer to our question. No doubt, the conflict of defense secrecy with the public nature of science raised a capital issue for the scientists, but it is different from the present one.

The scientist in our tradition is dedicated to the advancement of knowledge, and he cannot compromise with the demands made in every generation that this or that line of inquiry shall not be pursued because of the evil that may come from new knowledge gained. The scientist's answer, and the answer of all true universities, has been that the scholar's pursuit of knowledge is for its own sake, that such pursuit is the scholar's duty and his liberty, and that whether resulting knowledge is put to good or evil use is for society generally to decide. Nor, as we are frequently reminded, does all this mean that the scientist's activity is immoral or even amoral. The pursuit of truth is itself a moral activity, and in some ways a bridge between science and ethics. The new question is whether this bridge is strong enough to bear the scientist laden with knowledge sought for with awareness that its acquisition brings all mankind to destruction's edge.

C. P. Snow in 1960 offered some reinforcement to the bridge. Scientists (he thought, as many scientists had already done) must recognize a supplementary "moral imperative" to warn mankind of the dangers arising from new-won knowledge, for instance that about continued nuclear testing. Furthermore, he said, scientists have a duty to shun the model of "implicit obedience" to a "wicked Government" that was typical and even appropriate for the German Officer Corps.

The scientist's duty to give clear and fearless warnings to his fellowmen of perils revealed by expertise in nuclear weapons is as obvious as its value is dubious. If such warnings do not improve human prospects of meeting the perils, their only effect would be to quiet the scholarly conscience. Would such warnings, for example, improve our prospects in relation to nuclear testing? It would seem naïve to assume that the governments concerned lack knowledge of the consequences of failure to agree. The difficulties lie not in ignorance, but in the tough complexities of international politics, and the perfectly warranted fear of each side

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of finding itself at the mercy of the other. So far as words can convey such dire realities, moreover, the peoples have already also received the knowledge. How often will they attend to such an oft-told tale, even from scientists? And even if they would listen once again, what consequent action would be open to them that could make any difference? Can it be sufficient performance of duty to warn mankind of a danger that you have helped to put in its path, if there is no other path that mankind can take, and no practicable means of removing the danger? To offer this kind of alternative—World Government or Perish? Clearly it cannot. Yet on final analysis this has been a common position of scientists, for example, in the 1948 Statement of the Emergency Committee of Atomic Scientists, and has continued echoing in sincere discussion ever since.

What about a scientist's duty not to obey a "wicked government," or (as Wiener had it) "the tragic insolence of the military mind"? The most plausible defense of the scientists who helped bring about the Manhattan Project is that since Nazism approached absolute evil, and since the Nazis might have been preparing fission bombs, Western scientists simply had to try to make them first. This very instance, however, may have neutralized itself. For it was certainly clear, before the first bomb was used against Hiroshima, that neither Nazi Germany nor Japan had the bomb. The resulting agony of mind of many Western scientists at that time is well known. The subsequent use of the bomb, in order to save Allied lives in a long and arduous island-hopping approach to Japan, leaves undiminished the urgency of our question as it applies to scientists who continued to work on nuclear weapons after this stage.

Here is the point at which Snow finally seems critical of the activity of the first atomic scientists. He seems to say that the point of culpability is reached when they have continued their work "in obedience" to the nation-state. "Soldiers have to obey. That is the foundation of their morality. It is not the foundation of scientific morality. Scientists have to question, and if necessary to rebel." This is presumably some special right and duty "to rebel," over and above the right of peoples under classical declarations of the

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Rights of Man. The modern scientist's knowledge (Snow thinks) gives him "tougher" ground to stand on in "saying no."

The real difficulty, however, lies in the question that Snow never reaches: Against what precisely ought scientists to rebel? To say that scientists must not place science obediently at the disposal of outrageously wicked regimes like the Nazi regime helps very little. The very final stages of knowledge-acquisition to base the deadliest applications may cover a long period, at one end of which governmental policy may look quite different from the way it looked at the other. Scientists may have knowingly made decisive contributions even before they recognize the "wickedness," or even before it is there. Moreover, in the normal situation groups of scientists of opposed nations work to provide such weapons in honest belief (or at least honest ignorance) as to the righteousness of their respective governments. The focus of present concern lies precisely here. Even apart from the "wickedness" of governments, has not the scientist still some questions to ask himself with regard to weapons whose use he can already foresee may spell the doom of mankind?

The long, patient, heroic struggle of scientists to defend their duty and liberty to extend knowledge against the threats of men fighting to protect the entrenched codes of religion, morals or politics, is a great epic. The present generations of the learned were born into a world that virtually took it for granted that the absoluteness of this duty and liberty were finally established. No one can doubt the *efficacy* of the unqualified traditional principle in the great enterprise of extending knowledge of the physical universe. The very achievements of science that at present agitate us proclaim it, and no paeans of praise need be added to the recent accounts of Jaspers, Oppenheimer and others.

As we said in opening, the present questioning is not intended to reflect on the propriety of the unqualified principle for former ages. Yet in the circumstances of our own age we may be confronted with a new kind of imperative, whether we think of this as issuing from ethics or from mere expediency. These new circumstances, transcending the matrix of traditional thought, arise at

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points where knowledge confronts humanity with a choice between impossible tasks of sudden psychological, social and political transformation on the one hand, and virtual self-destruction (as the penalty for failure) on the other. This kind of choice, brought by men to mankind, creates an unprecedented situation, which we should not hide from ourselves by poetical or philosophical constructions of the inevitability of the emergence of the present human plight from the moment when Prometheus brought fire to man's use. In such a situation even the most self-evident principles should not be immune from reexamination, albeit thereafter we may still have to reaffirm them.

What is the individual scientist's duty when it appears to him with what may be called "engineering truth," that to advance on a particular line of inquiry creates such a choice for humanity? Has the scientist done all that he can and should when he in effect tells his fellows: You must either abolish war by an overnight revolution in human nature and organization *or* resign yourself to perish from the earth? Is it really still nothing to him that this choice was only clamped on all men after a period of work by scientists that some at least foresaw would lead to it? There was, according to some accounts, a stage when less than a dozen minds acting together could at least have postponed the need for so catastrophic a choice, and when one or two wished to do so. No one can be sure that delay in this matter would have changed the course of history; but no one can be sure, either, that it would not. The Western Allies would scarcely have used nuclear weapons after the war was over; they might not even have pressed through to perfecting them. Why otherwise should Max Born have wished that Teller and others of his students had avoided precipitating the world into a desperate situation by showing "less cleverness and more wisdom"? Ought this perplexity not to be reexamined, when the fears that based it have proved so well founded?

This main point, however, does not depend on the history of the nuclear scientists. It is sufficient for us merely to *suppose* that there *may occur* in a line of scientific inquiry, a point at which the scientists concerned might, as responsible men, recognize that this kind of choice could be a consequence of the next step.

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It is a tempting course for us, *as individual scholars,* to dismiss this question as peremptorily foreclosed by our traditional principles. We then lose sight of the unprecedented nature of the problem. We then reaffirm in general terms, as Karl Jaspers has done, that not scientists as scientists but all men together are responsible for the evils that flow from the application of knowledge. The present writer does not believe that we can afford this inadvertence to the special features of our situation, to the known facts of contemporary international and social life, and to the known limits of mankind's presently attainable capacity for self-control and self-organization.

If even the sagest philosophy cannot wish away these features of our situation, must we not at least focus on the precise issue that they raise, rather than lose it from view in the broad flow of human history, the general advance of science and the sweep of cosmology? Must not the scientist, dedicated as he is to the extension of his specialized knowledge, demand of himself a *modicum of knowledge about mankind itself,* the knowledge at least, in Einstein's words, that "politics is harder than physics"?

We might conclude, despite all, that the scientist's duty and liberty to extend knowledge must remain unqualified. In that case, we would also need some better basis than we have for a supposedly "ethical" duty and liberty for some men knowingly to follow a course that spells destruction for all men. (Into this in any case vexed question of the nature of ethics we cannot here enter.) If, on the other hand, we concluded that the duty and liberty to extend knowledge must be somehow qualified for the sake of human survival, consequential questions of great moment would present themselves. How could such a qualification be framed so as to subvert as little as possible the traditional duty and liberty to extend knowledge? Could it indeed be made at all without destroying the integrity of science as a product of uninhibited individual minds? Would not the attempt to make it force the scientist to become either a pliant instrument of government, or a crank of his own individual conscience and imaginings?

These may be unanswerable questions. *But we should at least*

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ask them. Admittedly, the answers to them could not much affect the problem of nuclear weapons that precipitated the questions for our generation. Insofar, however, as we contrive to survive the consequences of the present generation of weapons, there will be other limit-situations with which scientific advance will confront us. Besides other weapons potentialities, moreover, the question may also have importance in other areas. A. Tiselius, indeed, recently observed that the next few decades could confront us with "more difficult problems" than that of nuclear weapons. As scientists seek drugs and psychological techniques for manipulating the human will and the human brain, or to control human heredity through growing knowledge of the gene-bearing chemical, D. N. A., may they too not bring about situations in which social and political life is put wholly at the mercy of a handful of manipulators? Here would be another kind of limit-situation, certainly less terrible than that of imminent threat of physical destruction. Would it exonerate a scientist concerned if, free society having by that time disappeared, he pleaded that society at large was to blame for failing to make sure that no person ever wielded political power who was not a paragon of morality and democratic virtue? (Such a scientist might, oddly enough, plead that while domination by a few is an ultimate evil, it is not *as* ultimate as the physical annihilation of mankind, and that he regarded it as the only hope of averting such annihilation. We would not agree with the assessment, but it would be more rational than the assumption of the early perfectibility of all who wield political power in the world.)

Finally, answer the above questions how we may, must we not seek better titles than we yet have for knowingly confronting mankind with an impossible choice between the Scylla of unachievable goals, and the Charybdis of inescapable destruction?

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India and China

FRANK MORAES

IN THE MIND OF THE AVERAGE INDIAN China poses the major oppressive problem. For the past fifteen years our relations with China have been built more on illusions than on facts. China and India would never be at war since for over two thousand years these two great neighboring countries had lived in peace, and the Himalayas with which much of Indian legend, literature and lore are entwined formed an impenetrable barrier guarding India's northern frontier. So we were led to believe. Overnight these illusions were shattered by the eruptive fact of China's aggression.

To an Indian the mental climate and outlook of other Asians have a compelling interest and fascination. The Chinese approach to most things contrasts strongly with the Indian. The intensification of the spiritual motif in Indian thought and writings springs not only from the religious traditions that animate Hindu society but from the tendency to identify a life of action with a life of the spirit. Therefore society, according to the orthodox Hindu, should conform to a religious or spiritual mold. The Hindu sees a kinship between the human and the divine, an attitude exemplified by the story of Socrates and the Indian philosophers.

"With what is Greek philosophy concerned?" they asked Socrates.

"With the study of all things human," said the Greek.

The Indians were puzzled. "But how," they asked, "can you study anything human until you know what is divine?"

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Divinity is a notion that neither disturbs nor interests the Chinese, least of all the Chinese Communists. The *Analects* of Confucius refer to religious ceremonial but never to heavenly spirits and seldom dwell on destiny. The great epics of Hindu religion and literature such as the *Ramayana,* the *Mahabharata* enshrining the Bhagavad-gita, and the *Upanishads* dwell largely on the mystical, the speculative and divine. More than anything else they have molded what might be called the Hindu habit of mind and made Hinduism, at once cohesive and divisive, the one factor that has preserved the unity in diversity that is India. The Chinese mind is monolithic, and in its impact more massive.

The writings of Mao Tse-tung reveal these qualities. Like every Communist's, his thinking is based on absolutes but in his case it is conditioned by practical needs and circumstances. "A room," he writes, "should be dusted or it will be covered with dust. One's face should be regularly washed or it will be dirty. This is also true of the ideology of our comrades and the work of the Party which should also be constantly cleaned."

Nehru in his own way also deals in absolutes but he has rarely conditioned them to practical needs. If Panchshil grew to be some sort of sacred scripture, nonalignment has become a dogma, and revulsion to the use of force a kind of holy doctrine. Echoing the Mahatma, Nehru has preached that force solves nothing and masters nothing although India herself has had to resort to force on occasion. Mao has not only maintained but proved the exact opposite although ethically the purists might condemn him for his violence. With Kipling he obviously believes that "iron, cold iron is master of them all." Parenthetically, it is curious that among Congressmen who never tire of talking of nonviolence not a single voice was raised in its favor when the Chinese hordes descended on us. The myth of nonviolence is as dead as the legend of Krishna Menon.

With Nehru, Marxism is an intellectual exercise which in its application he has perhaps at times carried to dangerously extreme lengths. With Mao it is a reality. When during the war Nehru said that black marketeers should be hanged to the nearest lamppost he was using a figure of speech. When Mao says it he means it. Nehru is emotionally eruptive and has his explosive outbursts, but violence

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has no place in his personal or political thinking. Mao, capable of lethal language, is also capable of lethal action. If it is necessary that heads should roll in the dust, roll they must.

Although the Indian mind is often convoluted and sometimes enigmatic, it lacks the curious combination of realism and elusiveness that distinguishes the Chinese mind. The Chinese mind is more nimble than the Indian's, gayer, less sensitive but more practical. Without being fanciful, it likes to express itself in imagery and illustration, and the habit of building up an argument through suggestion rather than statement gives conversation with a cultivated Chinese a curiously evanescent, will-o'-the-wisp quality. It is like Huang Chuan who painted in the "boneless way," disdaining to imprison his landscapes, flowers and birds within a drawn outline.

This allusiveness and elusiveness are strikingly evident in the Chinese notes preceding their aggression and in their cease-fire proposals which refuse to pinpoint what they mean by "the line of actual control." At the same time the Chinese in their calculations are basic and down-to-earth. Their cerebral processes are clear even if they prefer to present the end result to the other party in an elusive form. "Heaven is above and the Emperor is far away" runs an old Chinese saying. What the Chinese are interested in is earth, not heaven.

What exactly the Chinese mean by "the line of actual control" behind which they have directed us to withdraw twenty kilometers (or twelve and a half miles) while they do likewise is anybody's guess. According to the Chinese it is the line they occupied in the three sectors of the Sino-Indian border on November 7, 1959. The three sectors are Ladakh in the west; the middle sector along the northern boundary of Uttar Pradesh; and the eastern sector of NEFA defined by the McMahon line. According to us the line of actual control is the one we held prior to September 8, 1962, on which day the Chinese made their first thrusts in the Thagla Ridge region of NEFA. On that day, except in the Ladakh area, the Chinese roughly stood north of the highest Himalayan ridge which has always been our line of demarcation of the Sino-Indian border.

The obvious implication of our deadline of September 8 was

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that we might be prepared to parley over Ladakh but stood firm on the McMahon line and the middle sector. If the Chinese intention was the same they should have accepted our deadline but by setting it at November 7, 1959, they evidently aim at getting more. On November 7, 1959, the Chinese forces held a line in Ladakh, running from their Spanggur post via Khurnak and Kongka La northward to the main Aksai Chin road. Their actual claim line in Ladakh, however, stretches farther down to a little north of Chushul where they advanced following their offensive of October 20, overrunning in the process the forty-three posts India had established there since 1961 in our so-called "forward policy." Thus to the Chinese the actual line of control in Ladakh today appears to coincide with their claim line of November 7, 1959, which means that in addition to the nearly four thousand square miles of territory the Chinese have occupied since October 20 the Indian forces are required to fall back another twelve and a half miles, vacating as a result a few more hundred square miles of territory. The Chinese definition of their line of actual control in Ladakh is that "in the main" it coincides with "the traditional and customary line." But "the traditional and customary line" is way south of the Chinese November 7, 1959, line and roughly covers the area they occupy today.

The same equivocation and transparent trickery are obvious in their directives regarding the middle sector of Uttar Pradesh and the eastern sector of NEFA. In Uttar Pradesh we are actually asked to move twelve and a half miles south of the U.P. northern border, thereby vacating another few hundred square miles of our territory while the Chinese simultaneously warn us not to attempt to reoccupy the Wuji area which is now illegally occupied by them. Similarly, the Chinese make a show of withdrawing twenty kilometers from what they are pleased to call the "illegal" McMahon line, whereas in fact the actual line of control as they see it would include the Thagla Ridge which brings them to our side of the Himalayas within an area south of the McMahon line, which might include Tawang and includes Walong. In addition we are required to move another twelve and a half miles south of this unilaterally chosen Chinese line of actual control.

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Clearly the present position does not mark the end of hostilities with China. On the contrary it presages the beginning of another and more concentrated offensive—cold or hot—by Peking even if New Delhi meekly submits to its next dictate, for China's ultimate aim is to dominate the whole of Asia, thereby ultimately securing mastery of the Communist world including Russia. China will always be China.

The point was forcefully brought out in a recent lecture in London by Professor C. P. Fitzgerald, the well-known British authority on China. "There can be no two suns in one sky and no two rulers on earth" goes a Chinese saying from the days of the Empire. But, as Fitzgerald points out, there are now two suns in the Communist sky—the Chinese sun and the Russian sun. "The Chinese," he says, "have more than once made plain their view that they were the people who understood how to conduct revolutions in Asia, and therefore by implication in Africa also . . . and that the Russians really do not know much about this kind of thing." The Chinese, Fitzgerald notes, are also impatient at the thought of equality with foreign people including the Russians whom along with Englishmen, Americans and Indians they regard as foreign devils or barbarians. (When I was in Communist China some years ago a veteran British businessman then residing in China observed that the Chinese had the same contemptuous descriptive term for all foreigners. They referred to them as "long noses." The relative isolation of China in the last decade or so has intensified her racial and national chauvinism.)

Fitzgerald makes another interesting point. Anything or any place that China has at one time taken and incorporated henceforth becomes part of civilization and can never legally be surrendered. The Chinese word for "lost," used in the context of "lost territories," he explains, is "Shih" which means "betrayed to" and therefore indicates something legally recoverable. This is also the term used in Chinese history in the case of a city or territory lost by the emperor to any rebels. On the other hand, if such territory was recaptured by the emperor or even if the emperor took territory belonging to someone else, this territory was regarded as "returned," not "taken." Similarly any acquisition of territory, even if

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it had never been Chinese before, was deemed to be "returned." This is the Chinese approach to the McMahon Line.

To claim that our nonalignment policy has kept Russia apart from China on the border dispute is to flatter ourselves. It accords neither with history nor politics. We are not responsible for creating two suns in the Communist heaven. They were created respectively by China and Russia some time before the border crisis came to a head and were precipitated by growing ideological differences on the tactical plane, intensified in China's case by psychological differences. Communists are all agreed on their objective but sometimes they fall apart on their methods. To China the Russians have always been the barbarians to the north. Even today the Chinese Communists, while regarding the Russians as their allies, nurse a lingering resentment that the Russians should have got on the Communist road first. "It is bred in their bones," says Fitzgerald, "that they were the most superior people in the world, the only civilised people, and they find it hard not to revert to this attitude, perhaps half-unconsciously, on many occasions."

That a student of history like Mr. Nehru should have been so beguiled and deceived by them is astounding. Panchshil and peaceful coexistence are contrary to the Chinese character, history and politics. Mao has never been nonaligned. As far back as the early twenties he made his celebrated declaration: "We lean to one side." And he has leaned to one side ever since. Nor is it realistic to argue that Khrushchev, because he espouses nonalignment today, is any more wedded to the idea of Panchshil than Mao. He, too, leans to one side—his side.

The empire of China is identified with the realm of Communism. So is the empire of Russia. To both Khrushchev and Mao, beyond are the barbarians. Both however are fervently nationalist and fervently Communist. That is why a clash between them does not signify the breakup of Communism but the beginning of a race for the hegemony of the Communist world. Both men realize that there can be only one sun in the Communist sky.

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An Unprofessional Eye

Project for Another Country

BENJAMIN DEMOTT

> Society normally asks little or nothing of [the American intellectual without connections]; a reform situation, on the other hand, seems to present him with a role. Yet even here the only pressures exerted on him involve the maintenance of a steady stream of new and exciting ideas; his only measurement of effect must be that of audience appeal; his principal question must continue to be, How many are listening? The pressures he does not feel are the concrete demands of an institution as such; he feels no direct responsibility for a clientele; he has, in short, no vested interest. The result for the intellectual is a situation of no limits. His reform thinking will tend to be erratic, emotional, compulsive, and abstract.
>
> Stanley Elkins, *Slavery* (1959)

That the project won few unguarded good words, either from venturesome types who inspected its Harlem premises (a community center on West 137th Street near Lenox Avenue), or from viewers from afar, seemed on its face puzzling.

The Congressional act that underwrote it had been loudly hailed by leaders of both parties at the time of its passage in 1961. (The act empowered the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare to grant federal subsidies to privately initiated programs that "hold promise of making a substantial contribution to the prevention or control of juvenile delinquency.") The projectors' idea—that of organizing a "Domestic Peace Corps" whose members would serve for a year as "aides" in Harlem's understaffed welfare agencies—was modest and sensible. Volunteers had been recruited, details of their placement had been arranged, and an intelligent training program was under way—one that offered instruction in the skills of the social worker as well as in relevant history and sociology. The founders had coordinated their effort with that of the only major youth agency functioning in the area, and had secured recognition from City Hall—in the form of commitments to provide medical care, in municipal hospitals, for the volunteers. And, in addition, they had advanced beyond the maze of practical problems to frame a conceptual definition of their goals. (Drawing on role psychology, and on the studies of "delinquency subcultures" made by Richard Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin, it envisioned the college-educated Negro volunteers both as "supplementary welfare personnel" and as "role models" for Harlem youth in the large.) Final assessment of the project was, obviously, a matter for the future. But the fact of its existence, an independent, coherent enterprise in what is called self-help, amounted to fresh evidence that resources of leadership in the American Negro community were no longer negligible. And the likelihood appeared strong that this evidence would arouse a positive response.

As should be said at once, the failure of the likelihood to materialize wasn't equally mysterious in all quarters. Innocence, which believes among other things in the possibility of a federal grant without political dimensions, could not approve an award of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars to Harlem: the latter is Representative Adam Clayton Powell's territory and there are several points of connection between the project and the legislator. (The connections, none of them damning, were traced in fury by Senator John Williams of Dela-

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ware and the columnist Drew Pearson; questioned about them, the director of the project—a witty lawyer named Livingston Wingate—commented drily that the D.P.C. would increase the Congressman's local stature only if "cleanly conducted," and added that there were other reasons besides this for "not letting the project be touched.") And officials of the "real" Peace Corps had a fair complaint—arising out of problems in nomenclature. The founders of the Domestic Peace Corps had appropriated that title with brio but without sanction, and were still using it in a manner that blurred distinctions. The confusion became nearly impenetrable after the President's message to Congress of February 14, which recommended the creation of a "National Service Corps" and a "Youth Conservation Corps." (The former is often referred to in the press as the "Domestic Peace Corps.")

For the rest, there were murmurings that no group of thirty to thirty-five young men and women could hope to alter a world as seriously disadvantaged as Central Harlem —an area without a single public high school, cursed with the highest rates of delinquency and narcotics addiction in the country, and with the lowest personal incomes (on the average) in the city. And the scene itself, of course, was no richer in promise, or in hints of aspiration, than were the statistics. The routes traversed by the volunteers and staff members on their way to and from P. S. 100, the Abraham Lincoln Community Center, the Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr., Memorial Center and other destinations lead past grocery windows that advertise kingfish, coons, and

Turkey tips
necks
wings,

and past mocking sidestreet idlers ("How you doing, Buddy? Hey, Buddy, you go to college, Buddy? Hey Buddy, you go to City College? Hey, Buddy, how you doing?"). D.P.C. headquarters itself, a drab building attached to the foot of a beaten brownstone row, bears a wall-bolted notice of grim nonwelcome (NO LOITERING OR BALL-PLAYING). And the nearly decrepit rooms within, which house the male volunteers as well as remnants of an older community-center tradition (a beauty parlor among them), are redolent of hair-wave fluid, a scent highly nourishing to gloom.

But even in the context of "probable impact" the decision to rest in gloom seemed perverse. A pattern for the enlargement of enterprises like the Corps has been laid down (the hierarchy ascends from "planning grants" to "training and action grants" to "demonstration grants"), and the organizers of the Corps were following it closely. They made known to the volunteers that theirs was a "pilot project," and that the aim was not to transform Harlem but to build a record on which to base applications for larger grants; proof that small beginnings of this sort could issue in projects of indisputably significant scope was available in the history of the twelve and a half million dollar Mobilization For Youth program on New York's Lower East Side. Almost to a man, moreover, the outside observers who bothered to notice the D.P.C. were themselves familiar not only with the "structure" of welfare grants but with political reality—which is to say, they possessed knowledge that ought to have inhibited pessimism. But, as indicated, this knowledge had small effect: hostile writers spoke openly of the possibility of scandal, friendly writers adopted attitudes that D.P.C. staff members described, disappointedly, as "ironical and sarcastic." (The soundest of the reports, by Murray Kempton in the *New Republic,* spoke of the program as "an accident," claimed that the grant had been made "for all the wrong reasons," and suggested that the best that could be said for the Corps was that "the lives of these particular children [the volunteers] will never be exactly the same again.") The plain case was that even men of mind and known goodwill felt obliged to resist any impulse to enthusiasm. And, since the projectors' labors would undoubtedly be evaluated in part according to their success in exciting public support, questions about the ultimate source of this resistance had an edge of urgency as well as of interest.

The notion, fanciful at first glance, that

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a search for the source requires some attention to history gains force when differences between the D.P.C. and other attacks on "problems of Negroes" are brought into focus. The chief difference is that the Domestic Peace Corps addresses itself to these problems not with moral or juridical abstractions but in situational (or cultural) terms. Effort elsewhere takes shape as a struggle to guarantee legal rights or to show forth anti-Negro prejudice as evil. Here the labor is to understand Negro personality in its relation to a particular cultural setting, and to attempt to change that relation with the aim of altering basic patterns of character.

The currently accepted account of patterns of character in Harlem youth is, as would be expected, simple in its essentials. It stresses the sense of entrapment—that which, as Messrs. Cloward and Ohlin argue in their *Delinquency and Opportunity* (1960), controls behavior wherever institutional models of the way up and out are lacking:

> . . . many lower-class male adolescents experience desperation born of the certainty that their position in the economic structure is relatively fixed and immutable—a desperation made all the more poignant by their exposure to a cultural ideology in which failure to orient oneself upward is regarded as a moral defect and failure to become mobile as proof of it.

One way of countering or at least easing the desperation is to establish early on the immediacy of the relation between schooling and mobility ("some youths become hoodlums . . . not because they lack the ability to succeed legitimately . . . but because they find out too late the relationship between school adjustment and [upward social mobility]"). And it is with this end in mind that the D.P.C. assigns a volunteer —a poised, attractive college student from Southern University and Baton Rouge, Louisiana, named Mildred Love—to P. S. 100, the local elementary school. Miss Love's task is to assist in organizing a preschool clinic for parents of first graders. The purpose of the clinic is to initiate talk in pleasant circumstances between parents and teachers, thereby creating school as a reality—a place of interest to whole families which, if treated earnestly from the start, can have as considerable an effect upon the life of the first grader grown to adulthood as it visibly has had in Miss Love's. Implicit in the undertaking, naturally, is a conviction that only an educated Negro can contend against discrimination and ultimately contribute to the Negro cause. But at its center lies an appeal not to a sacred cause or to the sense of self-satisfaction or moral outrage, but to self-*dis*satisfaction and personal ambition.

And precisely here, as it seems, lies one root of the failure of the D.P.C. projectors to win ardent backing among outsiders. American liberals have usually been impatient, suspicious or contemptuous of versions of "the Negro problem" that emphasize Negro incapacities, or otherwise imply that second-class citizenship is not simply a function of white men's viciousness. Some writers of tact, to be sure, have managed to hold their audience while sketching these incapacities—but only by insisting (properly) that the latter are a direct result of cultural deprivation, and by avoiding (sometimes disingenuously) the question of how juridical action can be expected to repair them. A historian of C. Vann Woodward's stature can direct his reader toward awareness that Negro leaders themselves helped to create the image of the "inferior being." (". . . in proposing the virtual retirement of the mass of Negroes from the political life of the South, and in stressing the humble and menial role that the race was to play," Woodward wrote in *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* [1955, 1957], Booker T. Washington produced "a submissive philosophy for the Negro that to some whites must have appeared an invitation to further aggression.") And implicit in every assessment of race relations this historian has made is a feeling for the necessity of naming the stages of the Negro's self-development:

> Negroes played important roles in both reconstruction periods, but it is obvious that in the present movement they are vastly better equipped to defend themselves and advance their cause than were their newly emancipated,

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propertyless, and largely illiterate grandfathers and great-grandfathers. Negroes have already shown new capacities for leadership that have surprised their friends as well as their opponents. In the long run, it may be that their own resources will prove decisive in the contest.

But writers who approach closer to the subject of self-development have not found it easy to win a hearing. Stanley Elkins's *Slavery* (1959), an invaluable book, argued convincingly that the stereotype of the Negro slave (Sambo) was in fact no stereotype but a fair representation of the man in that age—since, as comparative studies of slave cultures indicated, infantilism was the only possible direction for character to take in the unique slave culture of nineteenth-century America. With this thesis in the foreground, Elkins went on to criticize the abolitionists who, oblivious to the truth that "a man's humanity, such as he has, lies not in his naked essence but in his culture," promulgated the doctrine of instant equality. ("Here is man," said Emerson, "and if you have man, black or white is an insignificance.") The reaction of historians was wary, perhaps in part because acceptance of such arguments meant sacrificing the simple moral vocabulary—virtue against vice—in which "racial problems" have ever been defined. And it is doubtful that many right-thinking liberals are even now prepared to make that sacrifice. The 1954 Supreme Court decision that reversed the "separate and equal" rule was followed by outbursts of abstract moralizing not much different in temper from those that preceded the Civil War. The suggestion that civic adequacy must remain the primary goal, the claim that biological treatises proving that no ethnic group is "inherently" inferior weren't of particular value in the situation at hand—these were cast out as finkery. Afloat on a self-inflating cushion of sentimental guilt, the white liberal made once more for the ultra position—one which asserted (to use words that Professor Elkins applied to the abolitionists of the mid-nineteenth century) that:

> . . . the question was *all* moral; it must be contemplated in terms untouched by expediency, untarnished by society's organic compromises, uncorrupted even by society itself. It was a problem of conscience. . . .

With all this in mind it becomes a shade easier to understand the lukewarm response in 1963 to "reform thinking" that places its emphasis on Negro character as well as on white man's turpitude.

For full understanding, however, the eye of the observer needs also to consider the relation between such reform thinking and contemporary attitudes toward institutions. The Domestic Peace Corps, the Harlem Youth Program, the Philadelphia Tutoring Project—these and a number of other current undertakings are, as the handy jargon has it, institution-oriented. Each D.P.C. volunteer works in and through a community center, a school, a hospital, a welfare agency or a coherent neighborhood; each new venture—summer camps, programs of vocational guidance and leadership training—is founded within the existing institutional framework; the prime assumption is that for young minds the sight of a *usable* organization, the possibility of seeing one's life in a nonantipathetic relation to *any* institution, is bound to alter syndromes of violence or retreatism. But this positive view of institutions is out of harmony with current opinion elsewhere.

In a sense, of course, American faith in institutions has been "in process of breaking down" at nearly every period of American history. It isn't entirely without interest for the present point, for example, that Professor Elkins, to speak once more of him, attributes the moralizing fervor of the abolitionists to their remoteness from centers of organized power, and to the breakdown of such centers—the bar, the ministry, the political elite—during the 1830's. (At that hour, Elkins notes, the American was coming to possess a "new system of values," individualistic in assumption, with which he could " 'question' society itself, that very society which had made success possible and which offered him his future.") But the parallel is of limited application: in the 1960's opinion-makers do not question in-

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stitutions, they despise them. Literary and other fashion scolds the citizen and prizes the prophet; the conviction grows that the money culture has poisoned every social, political or religious instrument; persistence in locating the best hope for reform outside the naked individual psyche is dismissed as puerility.

What is more, the voice of the Negro himself has taken up these commonplaces —to the loudest chorus of approbation this voice has yet experienced. Some speeches in the vein described, admittedly, have been poorly received. The Black Muslim movement, which awaits an Armageddon that will destroy the whole structure of "white Christian society," has still won no Congressional support for its secessionary program. (According to C. Eric Lincoln, author of *The Black Muslims in America* [1962], the official Muslim proposal is as follows: "[Negroes], as the descendants of slaves who had contributed so much to the making of America without compensation . . . should be given a separate territory—'fertile and minerally rich'—which should be subsidized by the Federal Government 'for the next twenty to twenty-five years'—until the black nation is able to produce for its own needs.") But James Baldwin, probably at this moment the best-known Negro writer in the country, has written an account of Muslim leaders and theories (it forms the middle section of his famous "Letter from a Region of My Mind") which, although critical in conclusion, is rarely less than respectful in tone. And the response to the apocalyptic, violently anti-institutional program for "reform" set forth by that writer in the same document put beyond doubt the intensity of public enthusiasm for the oracular mode of address to racial issues.

The essay in question, admirable in its opening pages for an evocation of the caged hours of a Harlem boyhood, was marked by imaginative relish of moments of destruction ("The Negroes of this country may never be able to rise to power, but they are very well placed to ring down the curtain on the American dream"), and by existentialist death-mongering ("It seems to me that one ought to rejoice in the *fact* of death—ought to decide to earn one's death by confronting with passion the conundrum of life"). The "problem," as understood by Mr. Baldwin, was a matter of psychodynamics and inward moral states, an item vision alone, not history, could fathom:

> The white man's unadmitted—and apparently, to him, unspeakable—private fears and longings are projected onto the Negro. The only way he can be released from the Negro's tyrannical power over him is to consent, in effect, to become black himself, to become a part of that suffering and dancing country that he now watches wistfully from the heights of his lonely power and, armed with spiritual traveller's checks, visits surreptitiously after dark. How can one respect, let alone adopt, the values of people who do not, on any level whatever, live the way they say they do, or the way they say they should?

While Mr. Baldwin repeatedly reviled the hypocrisy of Christians, he did not reach the rhetorical pitch of William Lloyd Garrison, who a century ago was nominating Jesus Christ for the Presidency of the United States, and, as in the following passage, drove always at his own pace toward Apocalypse:

> If the State cannot survive the anti-slavery agitation, then let the State perish. If the Church must be cast down . . . then let the Church fall, and its fragments be scattered to the four winds of heaven, never more to curse the earth. If the American Union cannot be maintained . . . then let the American Union be consumed by a living thunderbolt, and no tear be shed over its ashes. If the Republic must be blotted out from the roll of nations . . . then let the Republic sink between the waves of oblivion, and a shout of joy, louder than the voice of many waters, fill the universe at its extinction.

Mr. Baldwin claimed only that:

> In order to survive as a human, moving, moral weight in the world America and all the Western nations will be forced to . . . discard nearly all the assumptions that have been used to justify their lives and their anguish and their crimes so long.

But he did invoke Biblical furies—the threat to Noah—in the slave song of his

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peroration (". . . no more water, the fire next time").*

And his audience was overwhelmed. Long before the "Letter" appeared in book form it had been hailed in reviews for its clarity and understanding. Essays were written in description of the sensations of readers who pursued the piece through the columns of the *New Yorker,* now receiving revelation, now being distracted by a perfume ad—and clerics (the Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Western Massachusetts, for one example) used the "Letter" as the text of Lenten Messages. An occasional writer paused in his praise to mention "politics." Mr. Norman Podhoretz, who placed Mr. Baldwin's essay "among the classics of our language," observed in *Commentary* that the "tragic fact is that love is not the answer to hate—not in the world of politics, at any rate." But this remark appeared in an article ("My Negro Problem—And Ours") that itself attempted to "personalize" the entire matter of race relations. The author began with autobiography, recreating the "twisted feelings" he had experienced as child and adult in his relations with Negroes. And he concluded with an assertion that miscegenation itself was the only reasonable answer to the problem:

> The Black Muslims, like their racist counterparts in the white world, accuse the "so-called Negro leaders" of secretly pursuing miscegenation as a goal. The racists are wrong, but I wish they were right, for I believe that the wholesale merging of the two races is the most desirable alternative for everyone concerned. I am not claiming that this alternative can be pursued programmatically or that it is immediately feasible as a solution; obviously there are even greater barriers to its achievement than to the achievement of integration. What I am saying, however, is that in my opinion the Negro problem can be solved in this country in no other way.

* The other regions of Mr. Baldwin's mind seem, as may be noted, similar in terrain. A sympathetically treated character in this writer's best-selling novel, *Another Country,* remarks: "Some days, honey, I wish I could turn myself into one big fist and grind this miserable country [America] into powder. Some days I don't believe it has the right to exist."

Mr. Baldwin's other enthusiasts did not take this last step. But with only one important exception—F. W. Dupee, whose shrewd comments on the book appeared as the leading article of the first issue of the *New York Review*—they were certain that *The Fire Next Time* was a pinnacle of illumination. And implicit in that assessment was yet another explanation of the apathy and boredom that greeted press releases about young Negro college students arriving in Harlem to work as institutional aides.

"The longer I live," said Peguy, "the less I believe in the efficiency of an extraordinary sudden social revolution, improvised, marvelous, with or without guns and impersonal dictatorship, and the more I believe in the efficiency of modest, slow, molecular, definitive, social work." Pleasing in pace and movement, these words can't finally be invoked without uneasiness here. To Stand Firm for modest, uncharged, institutional modes of "social work" is not only to forego "audience appeal," as the epigraph announces, it is to appear to minimize torment. Reason isn't speechless in the face of those who mock a century of "tokenism"; it can cite evidence that Negroes have only in recent decades committed themselves to the struggle for freedom, or it can instance the opinion of the archetypal objective observer, Gunnar Myrdal, who regards the advances of the last twenty years as phenomenal. But for the wounded such citations are poor balm. The student who sat-in and lost an eye for his pains, the men and women who walked for months to "earn the right" to ride where they pleased, the newspaper editors and professors hounded from their jobs for refusing to cant, the Negro county agent who, in Ralph McGill's heart-shaking story, renovated the interior of his house but left the exterior a shambles "to avoid trouble," Miss Lucy, Mr. Meredith, Mr. Gantt, children mauled and taunted, parents who, waiting in cars at school, peer suddenly into a chaos of glassen splinters, blood, screeching forms—these deserve a voice commensurate to the claims of agony, not merely

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to the claims of order. From Martin Luther King they hear the demand for justice:

> When a contemporary President declares . . . that all the massive resources of the Federal Government will enforce every constitutional right of Negroes he will split the reluctant and resisting South in two. . . . Their opposition will crumble before an implacable government, and desegregation across the South could be achieved in less than a year. The key to everything is Federal commitment, full, unequivocal, and unremitting.

From the Department of Justice they hear a United States Deputy Attorney General, Mr. Nicholas deB. Katzenbach, developing the mystique of tension:

> The measure of a civilization . . . is the degree to which its citizens voluntarily conform to otherwise unenforceable laws. Yet it is dangerous to press law too far. A community may embody its best standards, its ideals and aspirations, in the law and look to the influence of the law to pull its habits and institutions toward its goals. And there can and should be a tension, but if the tension grows too great, if the gulf between the law and the attitudes of the community becomes too wide, the spring may snap and put the whole rule of law in danger.

But amid this confusion the havoc cry of the man of the apocalypse is also in their ears, and of the three voices it is the last, the voice of Mr. Baldwin, that *makes pain matter*. Without the scream of fury, in short, pain conceivably would not know itself and the world of institutions would not encounter, often enough, the world of feeling.

But in the name of the odd dialectic of American Progress the screamers must in their turn be talked up to, even at the risk of encouraging complacency and obliviousness. They must be faced with the general truth—Tocqueville was first to assert it—that intensifications of the rage for reform occur when change occurs, and testify not to new disasters but to a new access of belief in the possibility of change. And they need also to be faced with the concrete demands for recognition of citizens who, although unacquainted with the *Fantasia of the Unconscious* and perhaps unenamoured of death, have elected to serve justice with labor. Do these citizens constitute a great host? Hardly. Bus riders and sit-ins and a few thousand schoolchildren; people who go door to door (encountering minor crudities and embarrassments) seeking signers for petitions that will commit their communities against discriminatory housing; college students to the number of one hundred and seventy-five who spend a summer teaching hard subjects to Negro schoolchildren; Dennis Westbrooks, aged twenty-four, at the Kennedy Memorial Center in Harlem who assists a group worker "in developing vocational guidance-teenage programs, and attempts to 'raise horizons' "; Kelton Sams, aged nineteen, at the Abraham Lincoln Community Center, who assists a group worker "in developing a leadership training program"; Roy Devoe, aged thirty-one, at the Interdepartmental Neighborhood Services Center, who "concentrates on a neighborhood and family approach to delinquency." Possessed of no rhetoric, troubled (many of them) by their unprotected commitment to decency, these figures come quickly to perceive that at the gritty bottom of some resistance to change lies, not hatred, but ordinary human laziness and self-absorption. The perception is neither exhilarating nor depressing. Nothing better can be said for it—this piece of reality, of experience as found—than that it constitutes the frail underpinnings of faith in "the efficiency of modest, slow, molecular, definitive, social work." And those who shrug off that faith while crying up cataclysm have proved, to repeat, that they also serve. But they do not serve themselves: here is the Ineluctable that may deliver the future to the uncelebrated "Peace Corpsmen of Harlem," while giving only the present to rhetoricians. In creating the abstract dream of unconditioned freedom Apocalyptic Man shakes the world—but loses touch with it, loses touch with the sense of others, the awareness of general life. And it remains a fact that this sense is all that stands between most men, pale or dark, here or in other countries, and the fire *this* time: the furnace of absolute self-love or absolute self-contempt.

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A Look Around . . . . . .

Do Unto Others . . . .

PAUL A. ZAHL

Focus for a moment on the glass-clear shoals off Funafuti, Ifalik, Bikini, the Queensland coast, or any other of the welter of tropical islands, strands and atolls that lie scattered within a broad equatorial cummerbund encircling the globe. The precise geographical location is unimportant so long as the sea is shallow and tepid and beyond the influence of continental river sediments or cool upwellings from the deep. Sunlight streams into lucid waters there to warm and energize immense beds of calcareous growth whose spikes, domes and branches are individually fragile, yet in the aggregate solid and resistant.

Stand with me on the beach of one such tropical island, just at the beginning of ebb tide. The quiet lagoon mirrors a sky of high fleece, while a thin white line a quarter-mile beyond marks the sea breaking against the reef's submerged outer edge. Abruptly as we watch, the lagoon quivers a bit, as if caught by a timid breeze, then begins perceptibly to lower, as an invisibly tugging moon coaxes ton after megaton of water seaward. Rocky outcroppings—one here, one there—break the surface, soon to comprise acre upon acre of boulder-strewn rubble, disappointingly drab, although we are aware that the shapes and colors of corals are too delicate to be appreciated from a distance.

We lay hold of a strong staff, pull on a pair of tough shoes, and make our way onto the reef, gingerly stepping from one crusty surface to the next. The air is still, the sun burning, and we are grateful for the broad-brimmed hats we have been advised to wear, also for the support of our sticks, for these wet coral lumps and clods are friable and gelatinously slick. The sounds here are *sotto voce*—the vague gurgle of ebbing water, the subdued roar of the distant surf, the occasional cry of a gull, the spitting and sucking of countless invertebrates settling down to an hour or two of intertidal austerity. Most creatures here have retreated into the coral labyrinth or found refuge in shallow depressions of trapped water all around.

But *Tridacna* clams cannot hide or swim about. Fixed for life on the coral substrate, they bask just beneath the surface of the reef's tidal residuum, valves agape, exposing brilliantly-hued mantle tissues to the radiant sun. Their breathing is barely perceptible: water drawn in through one aperture, pushed out through another. Gently with the tip of our staff we poke the nearest, a typical specimen about the size of a cantaloupe. Instantly the margins of its gleaming mantle jerk back to disappear between the valves, which themselves clamp shut with such determination as to shoot a saltwater geyser shoulder-high. We withdraw our staff and watch. Five, ten, fifteen seconds—the clam halves slowly part like the leaves of a Venus's-flytrap, and those delicate mantle laminations reappear.

Scattered within a ten-foot radius of where we stand, sit a dozen or more tridacnids sunning themselves, each a distinct glare of showy color. These are not the supergiants of the same genus that dwell customarily beyond the low tide zone and whose massive white shells are sought for decorative use in northern gardens. Never-

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theless they crystallize our point of present interest, for within the tissues of each mantle, clustered below the skin surface like the pigment particles of a sailor's tattoo, reside enormous numbers of microscopic alga cells, apparently at home in this improbable site.

How, as they metabolize, these algae absorb waste nitrates, phosphates and carbon dioxide from the clam's tissues is difficult to visualize unless one is accustomed to thinking in biochemical terms. It is an intricate process in which the plants, like artificial kidneys, perform an important excretory service for the clam, and perhaps at the same time provide their host with an added booster of oxygen and carbohydrate. In return, the algae not only receive the chemical essentials for photosynthesis, but also are furnished with a haven that maintains them by day in line with the sun's arc. Some species of reef clams have gone so far as to devise complicated lens structures for beaming sunlight into the deepest recesses of their algal gardens. This association—individuals of a plant species residing within the tissues of a willing animal—is neither parasitism nor commensalism. It is fair and square symbiosis: a living together in total intimacy, with reciprocal benefits.

The term *symbiosis* does not appear in the Sermon on the Mount or in the literature of modern socialism, yet in the domain of functional biology it connotes a two-way altruism—algae and fungi bound in close lichen "friendship"; leguminous plants sheltering nitrogen-fixing bacteria for the common advantage; wood-eating termites harboring in their intestinal tracts cellulose-digesting protozoa; mushroom mycelia growing among the root hairs of a forest giant for the good of each; the mutualism of aphids and *Lasius* ants, of certain sea anemones and *Lybia* crabs; the list could be extended for pages.

That such affinities most often have a trophic (nutrient) basis seems as much beside the point as the common view that altruism in man is first and foremost egocentric. Nor is much revealed by tracing symbiosis to parasitism as its point of probable origin, or by citing how in a slow step-by-step evolution the relationship became progressively less one-sided, until some quasi parity with the Golden Rule emerged.

The eclipsing fact is that symbiosis developed at all in the amoral world of plants and animals where tearing and being torn are the familiar forces, tooth and claw the proverbial instrumentalities. But it did, and with perhaps the boldest stroke on coral reefs, where this brand of interdependency serves the whole process of reef synthesis, and in this sense is a shore-shaper, an island-builder, a supporter of as diverse, colorful and crowded a menagerie as any on earth.

Proceeding cautiously from one coral head to the next, we move farther out on the reef, suddenly to find ourselves at the edge of an exquisitely crystalline pool six or eight feet across, perhaps five deep, its walls encrusted with living corals, softly blue, green, pink and purple. Its clean sand bottom is galactic with sea stars and spiny sea urchins; its vitreous interior a fishbowl for gaudy damsels, wrasse, surgeons, butterflies and parrots. The head of a watchful moray and the antennae of some weirdly painted crustacean poke out from under tiered ledges. The pool's additional thousand and one inhabitants, although well hidden or skillfully camouflaged, are so metabolically vital as to proclaim their presence.

Life and death in a biotope such as this are hardly separable, a restless and complex equilibrium prevailing between the forces of anabolism and catabolism, construction and demolition. Contributing dominantly on the creative side are the Madreporarian corals, whose capacity to remove calcium carbonate from seawater and deposit it in the form of limestone is fundamental. Underfoot and extending as far as the eye can see lie the works of these prodigious masons whose power, like that of the tridacnids, derives in considerable perhaps critical measure from their interstitial gardens. To be sure, corals are also ravenously carnivorous, seizing and consuming endless numbers of tiny crustaceans, fish hatchlings and other such micro-bits as com-

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prise the sea's meaty zoo plankton. But it is the extra and biochemically subtle lift given by their photosynthesizing partners that spurs the reef builders' rapid proliferation and amazing growth.

We reach down and break off a finger-long spike from a fakir's bed of blue *Acropora* staghorn bristling along one edge just below the pool's glassy surface. Gone in an instant is the velvety fuzz that cloaked the spike before our touch, a thousand coral polyps having withdrawn into the security of their limestone crypts. By scraping the spike with the blade of a pocketknife, we rupture some of the contracted polyps, and the blade comes away bearing an edge of greenish-brown slime which we examine through a hand magnifier. But the lens is far too weak; the cellular components of the ooze are so infinitesimal that only a powerful laboratory microscope would reveal them. Not much larger than a blood corpuscle, each alga cell is loaded with chlorophyll, that universal elixir for the storage of solar energy within the molecular confines of newly synthesized carbohydrate. Their number in that bed of staghorn must be astronomical.

The zoological units (technically, polyps) of every coral mass are of basic coelenterate design, each a simple and usually tiny thimble of translucent tissue fringed, flowerlike, with a corona of waving tentacles, and each loaded with symbiotic algae that perform the same function and receive the same benefits as do those in the clam. But while the clam retains its entity as an individual, the coral polyp surrenders some autonomy, affixing its limestone hut snugly to those of its neighbors. What factors or benefits support this type of social cohesion are unknown. In any case, the resulting limestone structure is architecturally distinct for each coral species, of which there are some twenty-five hundred throughout the marine world. A cursory glance into the pool reveals platters, tiers, cerebrally convoluted lumps, fans, a forest of antlerlike branchings—each representing a discrete species. Frustrating, however, to any attempt at quick identification is the fact that a coral colony growing in a quiet tide pool may vary considerably in configuration from that of the identical species located on the buffeted outer reef. Clearly, the form into which the individual stone chambers are welded is affected by the physical character of the environment.

After the normal demise of coral polyps, their calcareous remains persist, and on these grow new polyps, with new limestone thus ever being added to the sun-exposed outer surface of the ancestral structure. In the course of geological time, this amassment of coral gravestones—along with a miscellaneous accumulation of mollusc shells, arthropod and echinoderm husks, foraminifera tests and the leavings of such calcareous sea plants as *Lithothamnion* and *Porolithon*—builds shores, atolls and islands of staggering bulk. Some reefs grow with only moderate speed, others so rapidly as to render obsolete any navigation charts older than twenty years.

The vast tonnage of limestone underlying every reef's viable upper crust may extend downward hundreds and even thousands of feet, and this seems puzzling in view of calcareous deposition having occurred only in the sun-illumined shallows of the surface zone. A generally accepted explanation, first premised on purely theoretical grounds by Charles Darwin, holds that atolls and other coral structures thicken vertically in response to the sea floor's slow subsidence, provided, of course, that reef growth at the surface is fast enough to keep pace with bottom sinkage.

Among destructive elements continually at work on the reef are, paradoxically, those hosts of creatures that themselves find the limestone labyrinth a refuge—the bacteria and protozoa; the sponges, echinoderms and worms; the molluscs, shrimps and crabs; the legions of glittery reef fishes—all rubbing, dissolving, boring, burrowing and tearing at what the coral masons and their algal collaborators have hewn from sunlight, water and mineral. And finally, the sea itself, with its eroding tides, violent storms and crushing surf, pulverizes endlessly.

By now we have made it to the reef's outer edge, where swells from the deep cannonade. Overflow cascades from vents in

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the outer wall after each inundating surge. Coral construction here is tight and unbranched, with scarcely any pool depressions, for calcareous growths of pink and reddish *Lithothamnion* cover all, to create a solid almost smooth pavement. Yet even these shock-resisting reef cementers are not wholly immune to sea power. Torn from the reef's ramparts and upended here and there, lie boulders weighing many tons, each a monument to the strength of the heaving ocean.

We dare not idle, for the tide has begun to turn, and it would be disastrous to be stranded here. Halfway back to the beach and now well beyond that danger, we pause again, attracted by an enormous sea anemone the color of crème de menthe and wide as an old-fashioned washtub, spreading itself just below the surface in a sheltered grotto. The creature's trunk is attached to the coral substrate by a fleshy disc, although we can see neither trunk nor disc, for they are hidden by a mass of tentacles waving and writhing like the serpents of a Gorgon's head.

We reach down and, with a slight tug, pluck off one of the tentacles. Instantly the entire jelly mass contracts, and the spaghetti-like strand in our fingers collapses into a gooey lump from whose severed end a dark green paste exudes. We have already learned *why* it is green. As though to emulate the reef's clams and corals, the anemone has learned to be hospitable to those who know the secret of photosynthesis.

How the chlorophyllic guests enter coral, clam or anemone in the first place is imperfectly understood, although some students believe the algae are passed, via eggs and embryos, directly from one generation of animal to the next. Others speculate that alga cells from the tissues of a dying or disintegrating host float free for a time until drawn into the body of some other water-breathing reef inhabitant willing to receive them; there they quickly settle in appropriate tissues, begin to photosynthesize, and before long proliferate into populations great enough to serve themselves and their host effectively. There is another possibility that symbiotic algae now and then undergo conversion into spermlike swimmers able to select whatever new location seems attractive, there reverting to their previous vegetative form. Whatever their mode of dispersal, most symbiotic algae are known to be members of the Dinophyceae, a family of exceedingly primitive organisms delegated by taxonomists to a position near the very bottom of the evolutionary scale.

We bend down to wash the tentacle bit with its green ooze from our fingers. The tissue clings and must be brushed off forcibly, no doubt because in touching it our skin has been punctured by hundreds of microscopic hypodermics, now invisibly lodged therein, although we feel no sensation except for a general adhesiveness. All members of the phylum Coelenterata—corals, jellyfish and anemones—possess such weapons, ready at the slightest disturbance to fire broadside in prodigious numbers. The hypodermics (actually hollow filaments), hurled harpoonlike, pierce the offender, each depositing a droplet of poison—in the case of the notorious Portuguese man-of-war, a poison so virulent as to threaten even the human swimmer. That of most anemones and corals, on the other hand, is essentially harmless to man or perhaps it is injected less deeply. Weapons of this sort were not, of course, designed for use against terrestrial intruders but rather for impaling and paralyzing animalcules swirled day and night, to and fro, amongst the tentacles of every reef coelenterate.

Our anemone has expanded again, reexposing its greenery to the full glare of the midday sun. This time we notice three little orange fishes with broad vertical bands of white, nestling and nibbling among the tentacles. By some weird dispensation of nature, they are either immune to the microharpoons or remarkably favored by the anemone. When danger threatens, such as a prod from our staff, they dive into the tentacular mass as though into a featherbed, and if hard pressed will seek and receive refuge in the anemone's mouth until the danger is past. The host is presumed to benefit from the lure value of its gaudy collaborators who attract organisms lacking the

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crucial immunity or favor. For their part, the fishes receive a share of the meal or at least fall heir to the leavings.

Fishes in voluntary bondage to an anemone; polyps by the trillions uniting to produce acres of coral colonies, reef invertebrates like the clams, anemones and corals sharing the dividends of photosynthesis with their algal partners—impressions of these remarkable associations persist as we move shoreward ahead of the steadily rising tide. Although it is clear that social experimentation of this special sort is based on biochemical self-interest, we recall the old aphorism: Charity sees the need not the cause.

CONTROVERSY

Jacques Barzun's "What Is A Dictionary?" and Louis D. Rubin, Jr.'s "What's Wrong With Graduate Literary Study?" evoked a lively response—pro and con—from readers of the SCHOLAR's Spring 1963 issue, so much so that comments were still coming in as this issue went to press. In consequence, the SCHOLAR plans, in the Autumn issue, to share with our readers the sprightliest of these observations. This CONTROVERSY section is still open to contributions from readers, up to a limit of one thousand words.

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The Revolving Bookstand . . . . . .

The Dismemberment of Orpheus

Reflections on Modern Culture, Language and Literature

IHAB HASSAN

> If confusion is the sign of the times, I see at the root of this confusion a rupture between things and words, between things and the ideas and signs that are their representation.
>
> —Antonin Artaud

Modern literature is the enormous dream of men haunted by the mortality of their gods. But in dreams, the poet said, begin responsibilities. The enormity of modern literature springs from the soul of men, and moves in the very life of their culture. With this knowledge begin all responsibilities. Yet most of us look upon the mangled figures who possess the literary imagination of our time as if they were an alien breed. Even madmen know better than thus to elude their fate. Antonin Artaud was at times mad, and he saw the point with pitiless clarity: "What is most important . . . is not so much to defend a culture whose existence has never kept man from going hungry [he was not thinking of our bellies], as to extract, from what is called culture, ideas whose compelling force is identical with that of hunger."

My general purpose in this essay is to reflect on a strain of modern literature which, in its agonistic relation to culture, endeavors to extract from it the force of hunger, the force of desire. My specific aim will be to comment on the strategy of that literature in its labor to derive life from enforced deprivation. The strategy, it will be seen, leads literature from radical distortions of form to a parody of self-repudiation, and from the latter to a verbal equivalent of silence. Modern literature protests against the idea of culture; the ultimate protest of language is silence; the literature of silence entertains wordlessness for its future. This is the stark outline.

The outline is stark and the statements excessive; our road may not lead to Blake's palace of wisdom. Yet excess is not the only risk we run. In a particular sense, the literature of silence is not simply extreme; it is also subversive. For without language, history and society cease to exist, and civilization reverts to aboriginal darkness. According to the Gospel, in the Beginning was the Word, and human life became possible when the Word was made Flesh. Is the human race, then, which has come such a long and terrible way through the passages of prehistory, to be now turned back by some erratic dream? Quite to the contrary. Modern literature may be extreme and its dreams outrageous. But it is conceived in the interests of life, which always progress through contradictions. Two major trends, working now in uneasy unison and now in exuberant opposition, testify to this fact.

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The first trend reveals a growing disaffection with modern civilization, a profound grumbling which expresses itself, rather superficially, in adolescent violence, hipster anarchy and Oriental mysticism. The second trend, intimately related to the first, reveals a growing distrust of language as a medium of expression, and a distrust of form, which has impelled certain modern writers to cultivate chance and disorder as legitimate elements of the artistic process, or to evolve patterns of non-sense that may be called antiform. The distrust of language reflects a more radical distrust of reason, history and social organization. At bottom, the revolt is directed against those inseparable twins: Authority and Abstraction. For authority in social life and abstraction in language are corollaries: they are commandments issued to the flesh, coercing private experience into objective order. The two trends, we see, are aspects of the same quenchless feud. What is that feud?

Here I revert to the parable of my title. It is the death of Orpheus, first among singers, that provides a focus to the story. There are, of course, many versions of the story, although all are equally gory. Orpheus is killed by the Maenads at the behest of Dionysus or, in Ovid's version, in a fit of uncontrollable jealousy; for since the death of his wife, Eurydice, Orpheus had preferred the company of young men to women. One thing is clear: Orpheus, the supreme maker, was the victim of an inexorable clash between the Dionysian principle, represented by the frenzied Maenads, and the Apollonian ideal which he, as a poet, venerated. We do not really need a motive or excuse for the murder. The maker of songs offended the primal forces of life; he is overwhelmed by them. Ovid describes the scene thus:

Mad fury reigned, and even so, all weapons
Would have been softened by the singer's music,
But there was other orchestration: flutes
Shrilling, and trumpets braying loud, and drums,
Beating of breasts, and howling, so the lyre
Was overcome, and then at last the stones
Reddened with blood, the blood of the singer, heard
No more through all that outcry.

Orpheus pays for his "crime" against Dionysus with dismemberment. But the act of dismemberment is also a crime against Apollo, patron of culture, that demands both retribution and restitution. The Maenads cannot wash their bloody hands in the river Helicon which dives in horror into the ground; in one account, they are turned into twisted trees. This is retribution. And the head of Orpheus continues to sing, and where his limbs are buried by the Muses, the nightingales sing sweeter than anywhere else in the world. This is restitution. Retribution and restitution; meanwhile, the primordial conflict continues unresolved.

I take the myth of Orpheus to be a parable of the artist in our time. The powers of Dionysus, which our civilization has so harshly repressed, threaten to erupt with a vengeance. In the process, energy may overwhelm order; language may turn into a howl, a cackle, a terrible silence; form may be mangled as ruthlessly as the poor body of Orpheus was. And yet the haunting question remains, now as on that wild day in the hills of Thrace: must not the head of the poet be severed in order that he may continue to sing? Let me put the question even more bluntly: is it not necessary that life overwhelm art periodically to insure the health, the prevalence, of man? I should like to suggest that an affirmative answer to this question is perhaps more needful at this time than a negative one; and I should also like to propose that we are witnessing in modern literature a movement toward disorder, an attack on form, intended to recover a kind of human innocence. Here I end my parable and end my preamble. We can move closer to the subject by more specific cultural, historical and literary analysis.

The voice of common sense cannot be stilled; it leads to an overwhelming question. Why should the disaffection with civilization, in our age, be so acute as to drive literature to such extreme measures? The implication is always that intellectuals are baroque worriers, addicted to a pessimism which they impose on their age. Possibly so, although one suspects that our asylums and penitentiaries are full of men who did not

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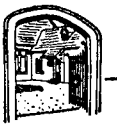
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worry enough. The question, however, still stands, and until a black Syntopicon of our maladies is compiled, we can only answer it obliquely. Let us begin with a few scattered and unlikely names. What drove Henry Miller to take as his motto the inscription: "When I hear the word Culture, I reach for my revolver?" What prompts Nikolai Berdyaev to say, in *The Fate of Man in the Modern World,* "What is taking place in the world to-day is not a crisis of humanism . . . , but the crisis of humanity"? And what leads Robert Ardrey, contemplating the fate of man among ancient fossils and murderous bones, to conclude thus his *African Genesis:* "Man is neither unique nor central nor necessarily here to stay. . . . The power of conscience, blind, anti-rational, and acting in alliance with the weapons fixation, will be the responsible force if self-annihilation be the human outcome"? Such statements, like grapeshot, penetrate the flesh in many places. The malady of man is antique; it is compounded by the malady of culture; both may be working toward an unholy climax.

Grapeshot scatters widely. Freud, however, probes the mind with a dagger. In *Civilization and Its Discontents,* Freud shows that society rests on instinctual repression. This much we all know. What we do not always realize is that every act of renunciation in our lives prepares the way for further renunciations. The matter does not end there. Freud goes on to argue that civilization, in its innermost dynamic, *requires more and more repression.* The psychic toll of this process is compounded. The implications of this process for literature are crucial. In a shocking and important book, *Life Against Death,* Norman O. Brown begins where Freud ends. Arguing that all sublimation entails a certain degree of negation of the life instincts, Brown concludes thus: "The negative moment in sublimation is plain in the inseparable connection between symbolism (in language, science, religion, and art) and abstraction. Abstraction, as Whitehead has taught us, is a denial of the living organ of experience, the living body as a whole. . . ." The logic then—and I do not know if it is quite as relentless as both Brown and Freud make it out to be—is that repression begets civilization, civilization begets more repression, more repression begets abstraction, and abstraction begets death. We are moving along the road of pure intelligence which, as Ferenczi thought, is a principle of madness. Is any salvation for the race possible? Brown offers this:

> The human ego must face the Dionysian reality, and therefore a great work of self-transformation lies ahead of it. For Nietzsche was right in saying that the Apollonian preserves, the Dionysian destroys, self-consciousness. As long as the structure of the ego is Apollonian, Dionysian experience can only be bought at the price of ego-dissolution. Nor can the issue be resolved by a "synthesis" of the Apollonian and the Dionysian ego. Hence the late Nietzsche preaches Dionysus. . . . The work of constructing a Dionysian ego is immense; but there are signs that it is already under way. If we can discern the Dionysian witches' brew in the upheavals of modern history—in the sexology of de Sade and the politics of Hitler—we can also discern in the romantic reaction the entry of Dionysus into consciousness.

For the neo-Freudians, then, the problem is repression, abstraction, and the solution is the construction of a Dionysian ego. In their view, language ultimately becomes "the natural speech of the body," a phrase adopted from Rilke.

But the fact that Brown cites Nietzsche is also relevant; for Nietzsche is indeed the crucial figure in the intellectual history of our time. He is the ancestor of both Freudians and Existentialists, and he is the living mediator between the two movements. Nietzsche's analysis of Western civilization offers, therefore, a parallel argument to Freud's, and one that is perhaps even more compelling. For Nietzsche, the root of evil in the modern world is not simply repression, which is wholly instinctual, but also nihilism, which acknowledges the conscious human drive to meaning. From the depths of the nineteenth century he proclaimed God dead, and he saw that the crisis of modern man was a crisis of values. "Why has the advent of nihilism become necessary?" Nietzsche asks in *The Will to Power.*

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And he answers: "because nihilism represents the ultimate logical conclusion of our great values and ideals—because we must experience nihilism before we can find out what values these 'values' really had. We require, at some time, new values." For him, as for contemporary Existentialists, the fundamental problem is obviously one of meaning. Unlike most of them, however, Nietzsche was a utopian. His solution rested on the affluence of life in the Superman. In that Nietzschean view, the ideal of language becomes action, becomes gesture, since the creation of meaning is less a verbal than a vital process.

Obviously, then, the prophecies of utopians, whether Freudian or Existentialist, minimize the role of sublimation, and therefore of language. The human Dionysus or the Superman of the future is simply not a loquacious creature. The future, however, is a long way off, and the business of men is neither to rush history nor to end it but simply to participate in it. Literature always calls our attention to the present in which we participate. It is, therefore, the response of literature to our age, an age of unusual negation, that must engage our immediate attention.

What is the response of literature to the culture of abstraction and repression? Let me cite three modern authors who are as different in age and background as possible: Thomas Mann, Albert Camus and Norman Mailer. Their common theme is danger, the danger to human life, the even graver danger to art. In two of his masterpieces, *Death in Venice* and *Doctor Faustus,* Mann portrays an artist-hero who trifles, at his peril, with total depravity. Like Orpheus, poor Aeschenbach is destroyed by the passions he had long neglected. Yet his head sings on with the voice of Mann himself. The voice is one of consummate irony, rising only to cancel itself in that self-parody which Mann, in his later years, believed to be the only hope of art. The knowledge of Leverkuhn is even more demonic; we are not surprised to discover that Doctor Faustus incarnates the theme of art on the verge of its own impossibility. Later still, Mann ventured into the chartless depths of crime. As Erich Heller put it, in *The Ironic German:* "Art tragically laments the loss of its own mystery in Doctor Faustus, and gaily reports it to the cosmic police in *Felix Krull.*" Gaily is the word, a dreadful gaiety. Ultimately, the face of disorder is comic, and the writer who wishes to capture its lineaments finds himself in the position of the notorious Cretan, who by affirming that all Cretans were liars, denied the truth in the process of stating it, or maintained the truth in the process of denying it—no one can tell exactly which. This is the silence of self-irony. With Camus, self-irony raises the question of ontological doubt. In *Resistance, Rebellion and Death* Camus says, "The hatred of art, of which our society provides such fine examples, is so effective today because it is kept alive by artists themselves. The doubt felt by the artists who preceded us concerned their own talent. The doubt felt by artists of today concerns the necessity of their art, hence their very existence." What is the nature of this doubt that ravages the artist and subverts his art? In the same essay Camus states: "To create today is to create dangerously. Any publication is an act, and that act exposes one to the passions of an age that forgives nothing. . . . The question, for all those who cannot live without art and what it signifies, is merely to find out how, among the police forces of so many ideologies . . . the strange liberty of creation is possible." The phrase "police forces of so many ideologies" subsumes all the repressive forms that the human intelligence has evolved in our time. The primary aim of these police forces is to exercise their control, in depth, on the instinctual impulses of man, and in breadth, on the existential freedom of his actions. Apollonian Form finally becomes Abstract Authority. We should not be surprised, therefore, to discover that the doubt of the artist to which Camus refers is the doubt concerning his very *being,* his identity not merely as a maker but also as a man. The reaction to this ontological doubt, I have already hinted, is twofold: the man rebels, and the artist *plays* at repudiating his art. The close connection between these two aspects of re-

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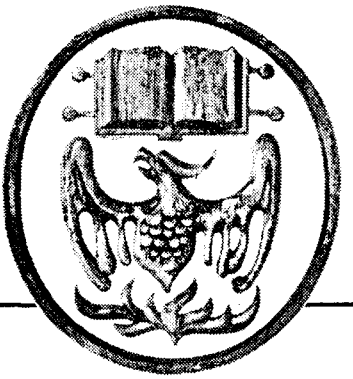

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volt—what the New Critics, may they rest in peace, call the biographical fallacy—is demonstrated by Norman Mailer. In "The White Negro" Mailer describes the "hipster" as "the man who knows that if our collective condition is to live with the instant death by atomic war, relatively quick death by the State . . . or with a slow death by conformity . . . why then the only life-giving answer is to accept the terms of death, to live with death as immediate danger, to divorce oneself from society, to exist without roots, to set out on that uncharted journey into the rebellious imperatives of the self. In short, whether the life is criminal or not, the decision is to encourage the psychopath in oneself, to explore that domain of experience where security is boredom and therefore sickness, and one exists in the present. . . ." Creating dangerously as an artist, the writer must also live dangerously as a man. For art, the risk is total self-repudiation; for man, it is self-annihilation.

The crisis of culture as of literature is evident. Literature, in our time, confronts the abstract and chilling gaze of Apollo, a deity closer to the Newton of Blake than to the gods of the Greeks, and closer still to the image of Dostoevski's Grand Inquisitor. Literature confronts Authority, and withers. Should it recoil too far back into the Dionysian sources of energy, should it avoid all abstraction and escape all sublimation, it will have expunged the motive for its being. For the Dionysian personality does not choose to live vicariously. Nor is it the kind of personality to escape abuse. We have lived to see the demented hope of Marinetti's Futurism consummated by Hitler. "Come then, seize the pickaxes and hammers! Sap the foundations of the venerable cities. We stand upon the extreme promontories of the centuries . . . ," Marinetti cried, and one visualizes the sullen face of Mars rising without promise of regeneration. Dionysus does not prophesy war. What he may prophesy is the complete wedding of Art and Life, by magic if nothing else. Perhaps this is what Pursewarden, the writer in Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet,* meant when he said, "The object of writing is to grow a personality which in the end enables man to transcend art." But the end is not near. We are all still very much in need of art. The best we can do, as Mailer declared, is to accept the terms of uncertainty, even of death, which are a part of our condition. This has been the strategy of literature in our time. It is a temporary strategy; it may even be temporizing. Literature recoils from the withering authority of the new Apollo; but it does not surrender itself wholly to the frenzy of Dionysus. It only *feigns* to do so. It employs self-irony and self-parody, as in the novels of Mann and Camus; it develops, as in the works of Beckett or Genet, forms that are antiforms; it cultivates a new literalism, as in the novels of Nathalie Sarraute or Robbe-Grillet; it evolves the poetic surrealism of John Hawkes and James Purdy or the collage improvisations of William Burroughs; and it sometimes entertains a chatty silence as the later work of Salinger does. Literature, in short, pretends to a wordy wordlessness and participates in the Dionysian denial of language not with its own flesh but with the irony of its divided intelligence.

So much for the heady response of literature to modern culture. Language aspires to silence and form moves toward antiform. Still, we may find some reassurance in the recognition that the modern phenomenon of antiform has a long and honorable history, and that it is not, therefore, a monstrous child of the moment. Its antecedent may be called the "open form," which is aptly defined by Robert Martin Adams, in *Strains of Discord,* as a structure of meanings that "include a major unresolved conflict with the intent of displaying its unresolvedness." An earnest evolutionist may go so far as to claim that just as literature seems to have developed from the mythical to the ironic modes, so do literary forms seem to develop from closed to open forms, and from open forms to antiforms. The distinction between closed and open forms is immediately apparent when we contrast two plays, Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* and Euripides' *Bacchae.* Adams is right in perceiving that while *Oedipus* manages to resolve its conflicts and to in-

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duce a state of partial repose in the audience, *The Bacchae* refuses to resolve its tensions and leaves its audience in a state of unreleased anguish. As a closed form, *Oedipus* expresses a conservative and religious view of the world, and a collective sense of experience; as an open form, *The Bacchae* conveys a radical and skeptical view of the world, and an individual sense of experience. By extrapolating boldly on this curve, we can say that as an antiform, Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* implies an ironic and nihilistic view of the world, and a dream-like sense of experience that is entirely private.

But we need not adhere to a strict theory of literary evolution in order to realize that between *The Bacchae* and *Waiting for Godot* a great number of works in Western literature have revealed a growing sense of disruption, an increasing capacity for distortion. Consider, in drama alone, the sequence suggested by the following plays: Shakespeare's *Hamlet,* Goethe's *Faust,* Büchner's *Woyzeck,* Kleist's *Prinz Von Homburg,* Maeterlinck's *Blue Bird,* Ibsen's *Ghosts,* Strindberg's *A Dream Play,* Jarry's *Ubu Roi,* Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of An Author,* Brecht's *Man's Man,* Genet's *The Blacks* and Ionesco's *The Killer.* Dramatic form seems to move from unresolved tensions to symbolic elusiveness, from the latter to surreal or expressionistic contortion, and finally comes to rest in absurdity. I limit myself to drama simply to maintain the purity of the illustration. But the movement of form toward antiform, despite large and irrefutable exceptions throughout history, can be observed in Western art generally.

It is probably fair to say that the three major phases of that development were marked by the emergence of Mannerism, Romanticism and Modernism. Mannerism was the formal dissolution of the Renaissance Style. It was, as Wylie Sypher suggests in *Four Stages of Renaissance Style,* a sign of strain and irresolution. In Mannerist art, "the psychological effect diverges from the structural logic." Here is Sypher's definition of what we mean by an open form:

> Behind the technical ingenuities of mannerist style there usually is a personal unrest, a complex psychology that agitates the form and the phrase. When we examine the strains within the mannerist structure in painting, architecture, and poetry, we inevitably become aware of the scourge—or the quicksand—within the mannerist temperament. Mannerism is experiment with the techniques of disproportion and disturbed balance; with zigzag, spiral shuttling motion; with space like a vortex or alley; with oblique or mobile points of view and strange—even abnormal—perspectives that yield approximations rather than certainties.

Is not this precisely the feeling we have about Shakespeare's later plays, Jacobean drama and Metaphysical poetry, as well as the paintings of Titian, Tintoretto and El Greco?

The Romantics, of course, went further toward unsettling literary forms, haunted as they were by that vague *Stimmung,* the craving for the infinite. *Faust* stands at the very threshold of the period, an amalgam of pagan and Christian influences which it transmuted, both in structure and theme, into a plea for life's outrageous contradictions—only the dazzling genius of Goethe could keep such a drama in artistic control. The dark company of Romantic heroes—Faust, Endymion, Alastor, Don Juan, Julien Sorel, Manfred, Axel—were forever threatening to break out from the mold that contained them, in proud insurrection against their makers. The Self had erupted in literature, and so had the dream and the unconscious. Novalis and Nerval, Hoffmann and Poe, Kleist and Büchner, Coleridge and Keats carried language into the midnight terrain of the soul, or else they cultivated that notorious romantic irony which served to incorporate in every statement its own negative. At other times, Romanticism denied itself the possibilities of harmony or resolution by the perversity of its own spirit. It explored sadism, demonism, cabalism, necrophily, vampirism, and lycanthropy, reaching for a definition of man where no human definition could obtain. It is no wonder that Goethe thought Romanticism to be a form of disease, and Hugo identified it with the grotesque. I am aware, of course, that I am emphasizing the nocturnal impulse of the movement. But

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that was precisely the impulse from which a large part of modern literature derived its energy. It was also the impulse, the agony if you wish, which helped to destroy the classic forms of literature. Mario Praz, in *The Romantic Agony,* says, "The essence of Romanticism comes to consist in that which cannot be described.... The Romantic exalts the artist who does not give a material form to his dreams—the poet ecstatic in front of a forever blank page, the musician who listens to the prodigious concerts of his soul without attempting to translate them into notes. It is romantic to consider concrete expression as a decadence, a contamination." Here, then, is the beginning of silence, a literature without words —or to be more precise, a literature that disdains all but the most primitive and magical use of language. The French Symbolists, who are, of course, the direct ancestors of the modern movement, exemplify this trend clearly. Mallarmé's sonnets devised the syntax of self-abolition; Rimbaud's *Illuminations* scrambled the denotation of language in an effort to derange the senses; and Lautréamont's *Maldoror* opened the way for surrealism. It may well be, as Brown claims, that in Romanticism Dionysus reentered the consciousness of literature. It is more certain that in Romanticism the dual retreat from language became evident: first, in the ironic and self-effacing manner of Mallarmé, and, second, in the indiscriminate and surrealistic manner of Rimbaud. In one, language aspires to Nothing; in the other it aspires to All. Both are manners of silence, formal disruptions of the relation between language and reality. It is these two modes, compounded in strange ratios, that account for the development of antiform in modern literature from Kafka to Beckett.

With Modernism, organized chaos reigns; or as Yeats put it, "the center cannot hold; / Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world, / The blood-dimmed tide is loosed...." It is impossible to convey in a few pages the extent of disintegration and reintegration in the major works of our century. In German literature, the frightening indeterminacy of Kafka's works and, in English literature, the over-determinacy of Joyce's later novels seem to carry the scourge in the language of Mallarmé and Rimbaud into the twentieth century. I do not wish to claim that Mallarmé influenced Kafka, or Rimbaud influenced Joyce, although they may well have done so in the mysterious ways of the creative process. I wish to suggest that the forms of Kafka, like those of Mallarmé, move toward a kind of semantic absence, a total ambiguity; and that the forms of Joyce, like those of Rimbaud, reach for a semantic fullness, a kind of total statement. There is an effort, in the first, to dissolve reality, and, in the second, to reconstruct the whole of it. (In this respect, Beckett is far closer to Kafka than he is to his former employer, Joyce.) Meantime, French literature was steering crazily between these two modes of antiform, veering now toward the one and now toward the other as it rushed through Dadaism, Surrealism, Existentialism, and, most recently, the New Literalism, or Roman Concret, of Butor, Sarraute, Mauriac and Robbe-Grillet. It is, of course, hopeless to discriminate adequately between all these movements in an article of this scope; our survey must remain a blitz through the literary history of four centuries.

I do not think, however, that this survey will have been totally vain if we recognize that the impulse first to distort, then to inhibit, language is a matter of long standing. It defines a strain—a single strain, to be sure, but a significant one—in Western literature. This strain is now confirmed by a renewed urge to withdraw from the word. Ironically, this urge has been sanctioned not by poetry but science, not by Dionysus but Apollo, not in the interests of the flesh but in the interests of abstraction. In an important article entitled "The Retreat from the Word," George Steiner clarifies the point. He writes:

> ...until the seventeenth century, the sphere of language encompassed nearly the whole of experience and reality; today, it comprises a narrower domain. It no longer articulates, or is relevant to, all major modes of action, thought, and sensibility. Large areas of meaning and praxis now belong to such non-verbal languages

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as mathematics, symbolic logic, and formulas of chemical or electronic relation. Other areas belong to the sub-languages or anti-languages of non-objective art and musique concrete. The world of words has shrunk.

This, of course, is largely true. The modern ideologies of men as diverse as Marx, Freud and Wittgenstein have all helped to diminish the powers of language to encompass reality. But Mr. Steiner, I fear, is an Apollonian himself, albeit one of the classical, anthropomorphic rather than the modern, dehumanized variety. He deplores the state of language in literate society, and thus concludes: "that civilization on which Apollo looks no more shall not long endure." It is my feeling, in this strident era of over-communication, that we are more likely to perish by the word than by the sword, and least of all to perish by a loving silence. But I do not wish to press the point very hard; contemporary literature, far from abdicating its role as a shaper of human consciousness, has accepted the challenge of the enemy. It has, that is, embraced the retreat from the word in order to renew the life of the culture that nourishes it. This development is so recent that it does not yet carry the authority of a major writer. Perhaps its clearest reflection is in that remarkable international movement called the Theatre of the Absurd which includes under one jaunty rubric the works of Beckett, Artaud, Genet, Adamov, Ionesco, Arrabal, Pinter, Gelber and Albee. No matter what we may think of it as an art form —and I think a good deal of it—we must recognize that the movement expresses, indirectly, nothing less than the desire to redeem Western values. Although the movement may not resurrect Dionysus on the stage before our astonished eyes, Martin Esslin is right when he says, "it is in this striving to communicate a basic and as yet undissolved totality of perception, and intuition of being, that we can find a key to the devaluation and disintegration of language in the Theatre of the Absurd."

Let me end with literary examples somewhat more detailed than any we have viewed so far, and also closer to our situation in America. In reviewing the current literary scene, it becomes quickly obvious that the attack on form and the retreat from language take on a peculiar hue in America. The hue is essentially comic, and it colors the genres of drama, poetry and fiction. I shall focus mainly on the last.

The new comic spirit in American literature attends a special awareness of reality, a new sense of error and incongruity. It unites horror and slapstick, realism and surrealism, in the most antic manner. Writers nowadays seem anxious to respond to the incoherence of life, to its openness and absurdity. They are relearning the old art of improvisation; they are cultivating the picaresque and the fantastic modes. Knowing how outrageous facts can be, they do not pretend to subdue the intractable stuff of reality with a Jamesian flourish or a mythical symbol. Random operations and radical distortions are accepted in literature not simply as a source of humor but also as a critique of social goals and traditions. Chance, which defies the rigid predictability of contemporary life, restores a measure of individual freedom; and distortion defies the habitual response to the world we live in. This is sometimes carried so far as to reveal an anarchic impulse masked in tomfoolery. The clownish element can be sensed in the theatre of Albee and Gelber, the poetry of Corso and Ferlinghetti, the fiction of Kerouac and Burroughs. But it is by no means confined to efforts of the Beats or their associates; it is equally present in such works as Thomas Berger's *Reinhart in Love,* Joseph Heller's *Catch-22,* J. P. Donleavy's *The Ginger Man,* John Hawkes's *The Cannibal,* Saul Bellow's *Henderson the Rain King* or James Purdy's *Malcolm.* The new comedy, which combines boisterousness and bitterness, is really an attempt to restore sanity through madness or buffoonery. Above all, the new comedy seeks to preserve the health of the community through a qualified tolerance of disorder. Might not the dismemberment of Orpheus prove, after all, to be a comic event?

The connection between the new comedy and new antiforms can be illustrated by three recent works of fiction: Hawkes's *The*

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Cannibal, Salinger's *Seymour: An Introduction,* and Burroughs's *Naked Lunch.* I have chosen these works because they all possess a certain originality that is not very widely or wisely recognized, and because, different as they are, each represents a particular manner of tampering with form. Furthermore, I consider them all to be comic and surrealistic works: comic, in my sense of the word, because they acknowledge the open, indeterminate or absurd element in human experience, and surrealistic because they tilt and distort the surface of reality in order to express it.

John Hawkes is a striking and until quite recently a much neglected writer. He is the author of seven novels and novelettes, of which the best may still be *The Cannibal,* one of the deepest books to come out of World War Two. Like Djuna Barnes or Flannery O'Connor, Hawkes is a specialist in the gothic and grotesque, and his humor is the grim humor of nightmares. He understands the leering comedy of evil, and has written, "there is no pathetic fun or mournful frolic like our desire. The consummation of the sparrow's wings." He has also said, "If the true purpose of the novel is to assume a significant shape and to objectify the terrifying similarity between the unconscious desires of the solitary man and the disruptive needs of the visible world, then the satiric writer, running maliciously at the head of the mob and creating the shape of his meaningful psychic paradox as he goes, will serve best the novel's purpose."

In *The Cannibal,* the style of Hawkes moves into the twilight region between the rational and absurd. The images are chilly and monstrous. The characters are always out-of-focus, floating vaguely through a psychic continuum which is neither time nor space. The action is frighteningly simple. A German called Zizendorf is intent on killing the one American soldier, Leevey, who patrols on a motorcycle a third of the entire defeated nation. Both men are equally single-minded and inhuman. There is a town, "shriveled in structure and as decomposed as an oxen's tongue black with ants," and there is an insane asylum on a hill. The inmates go berserk, and one of them stalks a child through the novel, just as Zizendorf stalks his prey below. At the end, the lunatic literally devours the child, and Zizendorf kills the soldier. All men are cannibals, whether in love or in hate. A cold frenzy permeates the novel which telescopes the events of 1914 and 1945, dispelling the solidity of the known world with diabolic irrelevance and implacable poetry. And yet the book remains a tangled parable, hard, ruthless and comic, of the modern world. Its form crystallizes all those distortions prefigured in the flux of man's earliest and blackest recollections. And its language reverts to the syntax of dream or delirium, a crafty mirror of decomposed consciousness.

The act of decomposition is far more whimsical in the work of Salinger. *Zooey, Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters* and *Seymour: An Introduction* present a curious difficulty to the unwary critic. Many feel that the embarrassing mannerisms of these stories—their garrulousness, convolutions, private jokes and sly asides—betray the fumbling efforts of Salinger to render an experience he has not yet managed to master. I am not of that opinion; I consider the style of these novelettes to be an approximation of comic sur-realism, motivated by a sacramental notion of silence. Let me explain. In his earlier work, the dramatic gestures of Salinger's fiction were defined by the poles of love and of squalor. When the gestures aspired to love, or to pure religious expression, language reached into silence. When the gestures revealed their purely squalid or satiric content, language moved toward sentimentality. In recent years, Salinger has been far more concerned with love than with squalor, and both the language and the antiforms of his stories have been conditioned by an ideal of holiness. The verbal correlative to holiness, in Zen, is often silence. Salinger, however, is an author, not a Zen master. His task in describing Seymour, a "ringding enlightened man," is to convey in words a life that finds its true consummation in a poetry of silence.

The distrust of language is evident in all these later works. In *Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters,* Buddy Glass, the narra-

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tor, is comforted only by the tiny deaf-mute relative of the bride. Buddy says with disgust, "It was a day, God knows, not only of rampant signs and symbols but of wildly extensive communication via the written word." The profanation of language and spirit are ubiquitous—and identical. The climax of the story comes when Buddy confesses to the deaf-mute, that is, to unhearing ears, the truth about Seymour which he had withheld from all the others. Seymour's own attitude toward language is equally clear in the story: he believes that the Gettysburg Address should have been one man silently shaking his first at the audience on the occasion of fifty thousand deaths, and he also writes, "the human voice conspires to desecrate every thing on earth." In *Zooey,* the same revulsion from language is manifest. Buddy says, "The old horror of being a professional writer, and the usual stench of words that goes with it, is beginning to drive me out of my seat." A crucial insight he receives while talking to a little girl in a supermarket escapes words entirely, and he can only "go through the motions" of writing about it to his brother Zooey. The strange paradox of the stories is that their prolixity seems to undermine, rather than to confirm, the authority of words.

This is perhaps most obvious in *Seymour: An Introduction.* In the two earlier stories, language was brilliantly shattered and diffracted: letters, diaries, footnotes, messages scrawled on bathroom mirrors and quotations inscribed on beaverboard, telephone conversations and endless dialogue dispersed the power of the word, tilting and jumbling the modes of speech. The same practice is exaggerated in *Seymour.* Buddy, who is again the narrator, calls himself "a thesaurus of undetached prefatory remarks." The epigraphs to the novelette testify to the inability of language to cope with love. In the quotation from Kafka, love prevents language from exercising its verbal powers, and, in the quotation from Kierkegaard, language simply revolts against the author. But the implication is that a true artist will accept the subversion of language in the name of a richer art. Cultivating, as it were, his radical insufficiency, the writer, like Seymour playing marbles, must try not to aim, must try not to try. This is perhaps just what Salinger, in this loose and baggy monster of a narrative, seeks to dramatize. Unpretentious bouquets of "early-blooming parentheses" are offered to the reader; witty exhortations and knowing allusions to Salinger himself, who masquerades as Buddy, follow. "Oh, you out there—" Buddy cries to the reader, "with your enviable golden silence." The novelette has no conventional structure or climax; the portrait of Seymour turns out to be a whimsical catalogue of hair, eyes, ears or nose. Vignettes follow vignettes almost haphazardly. Language becomes indiscriminate, random, fluent beyond words. And when illumination finally comes to Buddy—one of only five such experiences in his lifetime—it comes in a purely accidental fashion. Actually, illumination comes to Buddy *because* he had opened himself to accident. Buddy is happy; he has understood himself as a writer because he has understood, with the help of Seymour, the value of suspending purpose. Could it be that the mannered volubility of the novelette is intended to dramatize for us the very same insight: that the happiness of art may lie in the freedom of language to seek some purposeless and indeterminate antiform?

Indeterminacy is carried further in *Naked Lunch.* This shocking work is sometimes considered the underground masterpiece of the Beat generation. (In last year's Edinburgh Festival, writers as different as Norman Mailer and Mary McCarthy praised it highly.) It is, of course, impossible to describe Burroughs's book and very hard to judge it; the mind reels under the impact of its outrageous vision, its demented language. The ghastly experiences of drug addiction, sexual perversion and political crime lie at its center, and they seem almost beyond the scope of the human imagination, a satirical nightmare which, like the more shattering works of Swift or Hieronymus Bosch, must be dreamt to be believed. In the terrifying metaphor of junk, "the mold of monopoly and posses-

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sion," Burroughs seems to have found an expression for solipsism as well as social annihilation. The fiend of narcotics devours everything in the book, devours even the diabolic sexuality that enrages the censors. The "novel" is finally a testament to the insanity of society, the wilfulness of the human spirit and the futility of language, a testament of blood and black laughter. "The title means exactly what the words say," Burroughs writes, "Naked lunch—a frozen moment when everyone sees what is on the end of every fork."

But the effect of gallows surrealism depends as much on the subject as on the style of the work. The style is unstrung, berserk, splintered. At times, it seems a product of what Burroughs calls "The Cut Up Method" which goes back to the surrealist antics of Tristan Tzara. Burroughs describes the method thus:

> Method is simple: Take a page or more or less of your own writing or from any writer living and or dead. Any written or spoken words. Cut into sections with scissors or switch blade as preferred and rearrange the sections. Looking away. Now write out the result. . . .
>
> Applications of cut up method are literally unlimited cut out from time limits. Old word lines keep you in old word slots. Cut your way out. Cut paper cut film cut tape. Scissors or switch blade as preferred. Take it to cut city.

There is the method, and there the rationale: "cut your way out!" Neumann's theory of games or the random spirit of Zen are equally valid in freeing man from predetermined forms, from language itself as we have understood it for several millenia of history. Hawkes twists and distorts, reaching for the decomposed consciousness of man; Salinger plays with artistic purpose, and begins to rely on the silence of diffuseness and improvisation; Burroughs actually employs a random method of composition. The purpose of indeterminacy is the same: cutting the way out. Out of what? Out of history, authority, form, abstraction. Into what? This is a matter each man, with luck, may determine alone.

The story of man, we must aver on faith, is without an ending. The story of literature is equally endless. We cannot gloat over the dangerous act of Orpheus' dismemberment. More than ever, we have much to preserve in the human heritage, and much to fear from the madness incarnated in history. Men of virtue cannot opt for disorder, or choose the terrible darkness of unconsciousness over the light of courage or devotion. Without language, without form, there can be no human cognition, and without cognition of the self as of the world, there can be no light. We should not revel, therefore, as the mindless Maenads did, in the destruction of Orpheus. In his death, we all die a little. And yet is this not also the Christian, indeed the primordial, paradox of experience: that in symbolic death there is renewed life, and in provisional destruction there is the promise of creation?

As a student of literature, I have described a trend toward formlessness and toward wordlessness. But in my view, a critic cannot hold back his moral commitment; he must also stand forth to testify. I therefore add to my description something more than a statement and less than a prescription. I add a plea: that we extend a little of our sympathy to the ordeal of modern literature, that ordeal by dismemberment which is our very own. We live in an age of organized chaos, and we have more to fear from organization than from chaos. The desire to thaw the frozen patterns of our life, to open the forms of our literature or of our society, is not merely an artistic aspiration; it is a moral necessity. There is so much that we have allowed habits and fears to exclude from our love; the human reach is shrunken. Yet life still beckons with bright surprise. We can but admire the artist—he is the composer, John Cage—who says, "Our intention is to affirm this life, not to bring order out of a chaos nor to suggest improvements in creation, but simply to wake up to the very life we're living, which is so excellent once one gets one's mind and one's desires out of its way and lets it act of its own accord." This is the statement of a man who rejects the tyrannies of art without refusing its exuberance. The artist in Cage is commensurate with the man. Nor will any lesser meas-

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ure do for audiences who expect to benefit from the bounties of art. No great art can survive without great audiences, and no audiences will survive at all without more quickness, more openness. The story is really a very old one. To hear again, to see again, to feel again, and perhaps sometimes to love what is seen or heard or felt—is this not the whisper of silence in modern literature? Is this not why the head of Orpheus sings on, and his sacrifice is finally justified?

An Old Dream Defended

THE OTHER SOCIETY. *By H. Darin-Drabkin. Harcourt, Brace and World. $5.95.*

Reviewed by OSCAR HANDLIN

In retrospect, the nationalists of the first decade of the twentieth century seem attractive in their innocence. The great wars were still in the future and the idealists could dream without anguish of peoples redeemed by nationhood to a higher level of social experience. Nationalism was then not narrow or particularistic. Its prophets labored not for themselves alone, nor for their particular folk only, but for mankind in general. National unity and dignity were a means of achieving universal reform.

This characteristic was particularly prominent in East European Zionism. For millions of Jews whose ghetto walls had just begun to crumble, the exposure to the impulses of modern life was unsettling. Many of them identified Zionism with their hope for a future that would be better than the past. Eager young men and women could not wait for a millenial redemption in God's own time; they insisted that it come at once and that it involve a total reconstruction of society. Such a people conceived of Palestine not merely as a place of refuge and as a means of resolving the Jewish problem in its narrow sense. They expected the Holy Land also to provide them with a setting for an experiment that would have significance for all the nations.

Their nationalist aspirations were therefore bound in with social ones. For centuries, the situation of the Jews had been abnormal, not only in their lack of a territorial base, but also in their separation from agriculture, the basic pursuit of other men. Since the Middle Ages, at least, the Jews had been divorced from the land and compelled to lead the life of petty tradesmen and artisans. Some of the more sensitive among them found it difficult to deny the accusation that their relationship to the economy had become largely parasitic. Normalization meant for them not merely the establishment of a national state, but also the development of a just social order based on the return to productive labor on the soil.

These impulses entered into the formation of the collective agricultural settlements of Palestine. The pioneers who went forth to make gardens in the desert organized themselves in kibbutzim, social units in which all the tasks of production and all the rights of consumption were communal. In the 1930's, with the onset of refugee migration, the settlements gained in strength; and since then, they have remained a permanent feature of life in Israel.

These communities form The Other Society, which is the subject of Dr. Darin-Drabkin's study. An official in the Israeli Ministry of Labor, Dr. Darin-Drabkin has been closely associated with the kibbutz for thirty years, and he writes as a convinced defender of its way of life out of which, he believes, will emerge a new type of man who works with his hands and also with his brain.

The book opens with a brief history of communal societies, ancient and modern, and then proceeds to a summary description of the structure of the kibbutz. The major part of the work, however, is devoted to an examination of the effectiveness of collective society. The author subjects the kibbutz to various tests of social and economic efficiency in order to demonstrate its worth to the nation. Although the book is

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OSCAR HANDLIN's most recent book is *The Dimensions of Liberty*. Mr. Handlin is Winthrop Professor of History at Harvard University.

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competently put together, its tone is that of a partisan brief and there is little that is novel in the treatment.

The chief interest of the volume arises from features incidental to its main purpose. The defensiveness of the author is significant. Gone is the assumption that the collective will be the form of the future for all men. Instead, the argument runs in terms of its utility in a larger community that will remain primarily individualistic. The percentage of the population that lives in kibbutzim has declined steadily since the end of the war. Increasingly, the communal settlers have to accept the fact that they will form a small and perhaps a dwindling minority in Israel. This will not be *The Society* of the future, but *The Other Society*.

Furthermore, the collective sector of Israeli society has always depended upon the external world for capital and credit, which it earned by its services in strengthening the line of defense against the Arabs and in pushing the advance into the desert. Only now, there is reason to fear that a more normal society, or at least one habituated to crisis, may prefer another way of life. The rise of the moshavim, in which individual farmers work their own plots with provision for limited cooperation has been a serious threat to the collectives. There is a genuine possibility that they will survive only through the loyalty of the state to a symbol of the pioneering days. It seems unlikely that they will grow.

Therefore their members clutch desperately at their old dream. In his introduction and in the epilogue, Dr. Darin-Drabkin continues to maintain his faith in the universal validity of a communal society. He sees that pattern of life reaching far back to the primitive communes of the Essenes. He envisions its future progress as in China and Russia, where the villagers form their kolkhoz and communes by their voluntary efforts. The "historical continuity in the communal vision" offers him the basis for the hope, in the epilogue, that the kibbutz will still show the way in which industrial society can be humanized. That events in Israel, some of which are analyzed in the body of the text, as well as those in China and Eastern Europe, cast doubts upon these assumptions troubles him not at all.

A Philosopher's Slant

THE MIND OF AFRICA. *By W. E. Abraham. University of Chicago Press. $4.*

Reviewed by ELIZABETH MARSHALL THOMAS

The Mind of Africa by W. E. Abraham, an assistant professor in philosophy at the University of Ghana, is a learned, deeply earnest, beautifully written and absorbing treatise, centering upon the need of a united Africa, an argument for Pan-Africa, and in philosophical terms an explanation of the ways in which Pan-Africa already exists. In the last lies the title, for it is the opinion of Mr. Abraham that the cultures of Africa are similar at the core, their differences being in the realm of differences among members of the same family. The apparent dissimilarities, and in particular the presence or absence of certain cultural institutions, he explains as the passing of the cultures through different phases of development.

As a paradigm of African culture he discusses with a philosophical slant, rather than an anthropological or sociological one, the Akan of Ghana, a group numbering more than four million people living in Ashanti, Axim and near Accra. In his discussion of Akan culture he demonstrates, among other things, various basic differences between Akan culture and the cultures of the West in the concepts of man as a spiritual being, of man in society, of family structure and family obligation, of art, government, law and war.

Akan was and is a culture in many ways to be envied. Because the colonial powers in Africa had little interest in changing culture, many of the best aspects of African cultures still survive. These must not be discarded in an effort to imitate the West. Africa must, like India, preserve the foun-

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✪ ELIZABETH MARSHALL THOMAS, who has worked for several years in South and East Africa, is the author of *The Harmless People,* a study of Bushmen of the Kalahari Desert.

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dations of its cultures, its cultural idioms and philosophies.

Using the example of Akan's highly developed culture and remembering that African cultures different from Akan are merely in different phases, Mr. Abraham urges the development of Pan-Africa which will create a nation larger than Europe, the United States, India and China together, with only two hundred million inhabitants, yet with vast areas of rich earth and forests and seemingly unlimited mineral resources.

The aims of this book are, one guesses, political. To encounter such statements as the premise that African cultural differences can be explained as phases will certainly disturb any reader with an anthropological or sociological leaning. Institutions and concepts found in African cultures are also found elsewhere, and whereas many cultures in Africa may be closely related to Akan, it would also seem that many bear no relationship at all, or show much promise of ever doing so.

But in reading the book it must be remembered that the idiom is philosophy. If someday there should be a Pan-Africa, and if its citizens regard Ashanti (by then perhaps even other cultures elsewhere than in Ghana) as giving a climate of culture of which everyone somehow partook, it will remind the West of the way we regard ancient Greece and Rome, and will not be surprising. *The Mind of Africa* could be an important book, and Mr. Abraham could be an important philosopher.

The Will to Prove

THE AGE OF SUSPICION: Essays on the Novel. *By Nathalie Sarraute. Translated by Maria Jolas. Braziller. $4.*

Reviewed by ALFRED CHESTER

Although there is, in American literary circles, a quite pronounced reluctance to read any of them, Nathalie Sarraute is lately assumed to be the best of the new French novelists. The rumor has somehow gotten around that she, among the four horsemen of the Apocalyptic Novel, is the one to bet on, even over the hitherto and equally unread favorite, Robbe-Grillet, and most people seem to prefer taking her excellence on faith, just as they did his. This unwillingness to read Mme. Sarraute and her colleagues despite their enormous and impressive reputations is, I think, due much more to a cloud of dullness that seems to appear at the very mention of their names than to the usual lazy resistance against the Really New—for in point of fact while these writers may be Really New to the French, they are not quite so Really New to us who have grown up on Joyce and Faulkner and Virginia Woolf and who a generation ago wished the interior monologue Godspeed on its journey into retirement.

I don't at all mean to dispel the cloud nor to encourage readers into an experience that I myself have found so boring when I say that there is actually a profound difference between the older Anglo-American novelists and the recent French ones, and the difference is that the new-wave writers come naturally out of a tradition that runs through Kafka, Sartre and Camus—the "novel in situation" as the French call it—and they have imposed upon it the technique of the modern psychological novel. What Kafka typifies, of course, is a disinterest in character as such, and when this disinterest merges with the interior monologue—a merging of apparent contradictions—we have a stream of consciousness that is not bedrocked to a character but that is itself the character. In other words, there is much less identifiable "self" to refer perceptions and thoughts back to. Here is how Nathalie Sarraute explains it in one of her essays:

> . . . the character as conceived in the old-style novel (along with the entire old-style mechanism that was used to make him stand out) does not succeed in containing the psychological

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✪ ALFRED CHESTER, author of the novel, *Jamie Is My Heart's Desire,* also writes short stories and criticism. A collection of his stories, *Behold Goliath,* will be published next January by Random House.

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reality of today. Instead of revealing it—as used to be the case—he makes it disappear. . . . And since what the characters gain [through traditional methods] in the way of facile vitality and plausibility is balanced by a loss of fundamental truth in the psychological states for which they serve as props, [the reader] must be kept from allowing his attention to wander or to be absorbed by the characters. For this he must be deprived as much as possible of all indications which, in spite of himself, and as a result of natural leaning, he seizes upon in order to create illusions.

Now it is true that our attention is kept from wandering to, say, a Mrs. Dalloway or a Mrs. Bloom, but it isn't true that our attention is kept from wandering—for if we are deprived of the traditional character, which has traditionally entertained us, we are not offered a substitute. And I expect a substitute, since art to me is first of all a diversion and a pleasure, an appeal *to* my senses and *through* my senses, and if it isn't this then it is science or philosophy or some other labor of the mind—but it isn't art. And I am impatient of writers who justify their inability or unwillingness to fill their basic role of entertainer by claiming that that which makes them most dull is a device to keep the reader most alert.

It is hard not to sound like a Philistine in bringing opposition to Mme. Sarraute, because she walls her position around with all the traditional bricks of the avant-garde. She grabs off the right to be boring; she promises herself recognition by posterity; she speaks of art as though it were a vow of celibacy; she keeps distinguishing between the modern and the old-fashioned—the modern being always hers. And this offends me deeply. Why should I have to be square just because she keeps shrieking how hip she is? Why is there no alternative to her kind of modernity? Why must I be a reactionary if I do not assume with her that a change in fashion or the logical development of an idea, because it is her fashion and her logic, means progress? These efforts to corner me into her assumptions "or else" seem to reflect not so much the conviction that her methods and experiments must lead to truth as the will to prove that her methods and experiments must prevail. She would rather be right than true, and one way of seeming right is by making all others appear wrong—very irritating in someone posing all the time as a relativist who is conscious of the eclectic nature of our period.

Had I found Mme. Sarraute's novels more pleasurable I might possibly have found her essays more palatable, for they are grave and austerely beautiful—so much so that there is always churchy organ music in the background. (This effect is heightened by the fact that she never stops speaking *ex cathedra*.) I might have accepted the essays as after-the-fact justifications of unusual and unpopular books, and that her theories didn't matter, given the feeling that they were constructed upon, and after, the internal necessity to create what she has created. But because her novels are so mental and so scheduled, I am inclined to believe that she is, as she implies, actually writing backwards, that her fictions spring from the head not the blood, from will not from nature, and that these essays are the reasons why she *should*, not why she has to, write as she does. Having figured out first what The Novel should be at this time, she writes it accordingly. How sad for her! Perhaps I am merely contrary and irresponsible, but if I could figure out what was next on the historical inevitability list, I would want to do just the opposite, especially if it didn't seem like fun. But Mme. Sarraute is too pious not to submit to her will for Destiny. And there is much to admire in her nunlike renunciations, even if we feel she is worshipping false gods. Listen . . .

Thus, in a moment analogous to that of painting, the novel, which only a stubborn adherence to obsolete techniques places in the position of a minor art, pursues with means that are uniquely its own a path which can only be its own; it leaves to the other arts—and, in particular, to the cinema—everything that does not actually belong to it. In the same way that photography occupies and fructifies the fields abandoned by painting, the cinema garners and perfects what is left by the novel. The reader, instead of demanding of the novel what every good novel has more than often refused him, i.e., light entertainment, can satisfy at the

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Circe

By GIOVANNI BATTISTA GELLI

Edited by ROBERT ADAMS, *Cornell University*

"WHILE I was a man, I liked my condition well enough, and had a very low opinion of beasts; but now I have tried their way of living, I am resolved to live and die a horse." Lion, Deer, Goat, and other animals enchanted by Circe similarly argue with Ulysses that they do not want to become men again. Their dialogues, the work of a Florentine shoemaker and humanist with a dedicated amateur's love of literature, were originally published in Italian in 1549. The present version is accompanied by an Introduction in which Robert Adams discusses Gelli's originality and characteristic Renaissance ideas in the work. It is illustrated with eleven hand-carved prints by Peter Kahn. *228 pages, frontis., illus.,* $4.00

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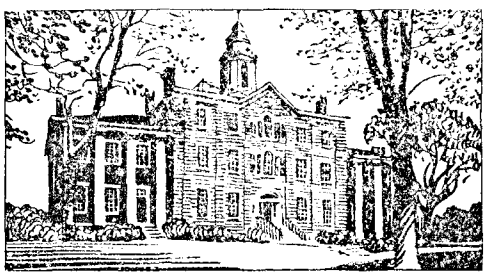

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from a sermon by Timothy Alden, first president of Allegheny College, at South Church in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, on January 4, 1801.

cinema, without effort and without needless loss of time, his taste for "live" characters and stories.

So the novel leaves, especially to the cinema, everything that does not belong to it. Is it possible that even its writers do not belong to it and that they too are being left to the movies? For after all two of the four most celebrated new-wave writers, Marguerite Duras and Robbe-Grillet, have written two of the most celebrated new-wave films: *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* and *Last Year at Marienbad.* And this latter film, for all its dullness and pretensions, seems to me the best piece of work produced in any form by any of the new novelists, and it has demonstrated how perfectly adaptable the new novel is to the cinema. Even its capacity to bore is adaptable, and these films are not light but ponderous entertainment. Perhaps soon Nathalie Sarraute and Butor will join the others in writing movies, and then the cinema too will have no right to be entertaining. Those of us who think art should be a pleasure will be shunted off to comic books in another collection of essays.

It is nice to reflect that Nathalie Sarraute has as her contemporary Jean Genet—and I mean Genet as novelist, not as playwright. Possibly his books are relevant to her theories; possibly not. It doesn't matter because whatever theories might be sent circling around him could not come too close without being destroyed. Like any great artist he gives you the feeling that he is willing to sacrifice any principle to the urgent interior whim, and everything in his books is always coming whence it must. Genet is inevitable as Nathalie Sarraute is expendable, and because he is inevitable he seems a million times more devout toward the novel than does Sarraute in all her piety. If Genet ever puts on the veil, it is only to wink at us through it, as when he says somewhere that his writing is all a pretext to describe a beautiful boy. It is such an irreverent thing to say and yet everything grows holy around it—the reader, the writer, the boy, the book, the world.

Mme. Sarraute may be right; but if she is, then God is wrong.

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—EDITOR

Maybe it's because of the newspaper strike and my consequent reading of more important matters or maybe this Spring issue of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR is exceptionally good. At any rate, having read every article very carefully, I am most enthusiastic about this issue.

Specifically, the article on "The American Past," by Professor Carl N. Degler, strikes me as sound and good. We are using entirely too many clichés and there is too much nonsense in connection with these revolutions which are taking place all over the world. There is something to be said for the revolutions but, as Professor Degler points out, they can't be said in terms of the American Revolution. I spent some weeks in Angola observing firsthand the so-called spontaneous revolution which had been compared by Ambassador Stevenson to our American Revolution. It was a fight all right, but it had nothing in common either in motivation or method of operation with our great struggle. Professor Degler in a scholarly manner has given a lot of real "food for thought."

Also, I was amused and interested in the critical article, "What's Wrong with Graduate Literary Study?" by Professor Rubin. This will make the hair stand up on the back of many an academic neck. It will be all for the good.

"The Promise of Underwater Archaeology," by Professor George Bass, dramatically ties in with a book that we have just printed on archaeology as part of the New York University Press series known as the Library of Science.

FRANK L. HOWLEY
Vice President
New York University

* * *

In Mr. Krutch's most recent article [AS: Spring, 1963] he has proposed a theory of Purpose (caps are his) in evolution that presumably stands in opposition to two previous ones, the transcendental and the inherent. He states that "orthodox science most vehemently repudiates" the first and "is only slightly more tolerant of the second." Mr. Krutch's own theory might be called the intentional. He argues that effective intentions are a factor determining man's behavior with respect to evolution and therefore, unless an unrealistic discontinuity is assumed between man and the rest of the animal world, is also in some measure a factor promoting animal evolutionary development.

By using Mr. Krutch's own reasoning to prove his third theory of Purpose, I believe it can be demonstrated that it is only a special case of the second; that intention is merely one way in which nature fulfills its inherent plan.

It is readily granted that a discontinuity between man and animal is incompatible with a consistent theory of evolution. But further, is it not true that any discontinuity postulated to exist between rungs in the evolutionary ladder is equally inconsistent with evolution? Mr. Krutch places the birth of effective intention somewhere in the biosphere on a low level of animal or perhaps plant development. Was intention new when the first "push" exerted itself toward articulation on that level or was it not inherent when the universe was still completely inorganic or even subatomic? Mr. Krutch unwittingly answers this—"But there is no conclusive argument against the assumption that it [intention] existed from the beginning and increased slowly as time went on rather than that it emerged discontinuously at the moment when a primate became a man."

If evolution is completely accepted, intention must be inborn, characteristic, inseparable from the universe, which is inherent in it. Perhaps Mr. Krutch is more tolerant of the theory of inherent Purpose than he thinks.

E. EDWARD BRUCE
New York

* * *

Edmond Cahn's "The Parchment Barriers" [AS: Winter, 1962-63] is an essay in ethical (distinguished from analytical or descriptive) jurisprudence, since it deals, in terms of express or implied ought-propositions, with that old chestnut of legal philosophy, the Case of the Unjust Law.

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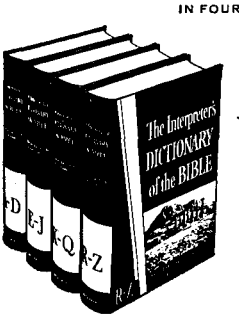

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South African judges points an unmistakable moral: Every democratic nation owes a solemn obligation to its judges to adopt a written bill of rights beyond the reach of legislature and executive."

The reason our Bill of Rights is "beyond the reach of legislature and executive" is that both our legal system and most of our fellow citizens accept the doctrine of judicial supremacy, which makes our judges the final arbiters of what is and is not lawful. Under such accepted doctrine, however, there is no body to which one can complain effectively of erosions in the traditional meanings of our enumerated popular rights, if the judges fail to recognize or agree either that there are traditional meanings which ought to be preserved or that the acts complained of constitute erosions which ought to be checked. Noting, ungraciously, that Professor Cahn's emphasis is on the ethical problem facing "decent" South African judges, I think it plain that a bill of rights would accomplish nothing for oppressed South Africans if their highest court were composed of today's doctrinaire Afrikaners.

In theory, the abstract, ethical problem posed by the "unjust" act of the highest decision-maker (whether it be court, *or* executive *or* legislature) is not solved by adopting an "authoritative text," as Professor Cahn calls our Bill of Rights, if such text necessarily is subject to interpretation by that same highest decision-maker.

In practice, of course, it is demonstrable that the text of our Bill of Rights has been accepted by our judges (our highest decision-makers) as authoritative, at least to the extent that their interpretations have not resulted in negations or wild distortions of the plain language of its text.

The operative word here is, of course, "accepted." How, why and to what extent people, including judges, come to accept certain pronouncements and behavior as "authoritative," "binding" or "valid" is the task not of ethical, but of descriptive jurisprudence. As a sequel to Professor Cahn's stimulating article, I would like to see in the SCHOLAR an article on the basic tenets of the two or three major current schools of descriptive jurisprudence, including particularly the one known as "Scandinavian legal realism." Although unqualified to write it, I am certain such an article would provide, for many of your regular readers, an illuminating introduction to a little known humanistic study of great importance to us all.

MICHAEL L. STRONG
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

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